

An interview with Demetrius Ewing

DEMETRIUS EWING

An Interview Conducted by

Jane C. Hazledine

January 10, 1981

SpC.
977
.245 (2)
E
G.C.

c1981 by the Vigo County Public Library
Terre Haute, Indiana

VIGO COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

No. 4292685
SpC. 977.246:E

"WORKS OF REFERENCE"

NARRATOR DATA SHEET

01/10/81

DATE

Name of narrator: Demetrius EwingAddress: 513 S. 15th St., Terre Haute, IN 47807 Phone: 232-3663Birthdate: 10/31/09 Birthplace: Clarksville, TNLength of residence in Terre Haute: 49 yearsEducation: Came to Terre Haute 4th grade--Lincoln School 16th & Elm to 9th grade; then Wiley high school, graduated Wiley, 1931; then Indiana State, 1 year, 1933.

Occupational history: Saxophone and clarinet in Paul Stuart's Orchestra, 8 years. Chauffeured Ed Walsh 11 years. In U.S. Army, PFC 3-1/2 years Army Band. To Terre Haute joined Irwin Jacobs in National Tailors, 509 Wabash, purchased the business after Mr. Jacobs' death; in business here since 1945.

Special interests, activities, etc. Music, commerce

Major subject(s) of interview: The black man, changes in this century.
Biographical material.

No. of tapes: 2 Length of interview: 2-1/2 hours

Terms of legal agreement: _____

Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
01/10/81	10 A.M.	National Tailors 11 South 6th St. Terre Haute	Jane C. Hazledine

8202685

DEMETRIUS EWING

Tape 1

January 10, 1981

National Tailors, 11 South 6th Street, Terre Haute, Indiana

INTERVIEWER: Jane C. Hazledine

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

©VCP 1981

JH: This is January 10, 1981. I am Jane Hazledine, and I am interviewing Demetrius Ewing, who is a local businessman and musician and a Terre Haute leader.

Mr. Ewing, would you tell us something about you first of all. Where were you born and when?

EWING: Well, I was born in Clarksville, Tennessee, October 31, 1909, and of course, that makes me about 71 years of age -- just a youngster.

JH: (laughs) Yes.

When did you come to Terre Haute?

EWING: We came to Terre Haute in 1921.

JH: What brought you here?

EWING: Well, my father was looking for better working conditions. He came to Terre Haute and he went to Indianapolis from Terre Haute. We were still living in Clarksville. And after he got a job in Indianapolis on the railroad, he came back over to Terre Haute and started to work for the Big Four /C.C.C. & St.L./ railroad company. He worked there for a number of years, and then he brought us to Terre Haute in 1921.

JH: What did he do for the railroad -- what was his job?

EWING: He was a hostler helper.

JH: I see. I don't know what this is.

EWING: Well, I think, if I remember correctly, he was the first black to be a hostler helper. That is in the roundhouse they moved the engines around and put them out on the tracks where they would want them. I am sure that he was about the first to be a hostler.

JH: Did he pursue this business then the rest of his life?

EWING: No, he didn't. He . . . my father was sort of a self-made man. Things didn't go the way he thought they should have gone, so he took another job. He went to the Terre Haute Malleable & Mfg. Co. to work. And he was making what he considered good money. I remember he came home and said, "Daisy" (that was my mother) "Daisy, I'm making a hundred dollars a month."

JH: A hundred dollars a month. Now, when would this have been?

EWING: That was about '24.

JH: Nineteen hundred twenty-four. And this was good pay.

EWING: That was good pay. He considered it good pay. Now, there were a number . . . we had seven boys and two girls in our family, and he procured . . . well, he took care of us with that little money. We didn't have fancy food or anything of this nature. But we had the substantials -- the beans, the potatoes, and what-have-you -- green beans. And mother would have a little garden. She did a lot of canning so that helped us tremendously.

JH: Where did you live?

EWING: Twenty-five nineteen North 17th Street, and we lived there until I was married. And I got married in '46 . . . '45, and I moved to the present location that I'm in. So, I've lived in two locations in this number of years I've been in Terre Haute. Twenty-five nineteen North 17th Street and 513 South 15th Street.

JH: So you were in the north end and the south end.

EWING: That's right. And I went across town to go to Wiley. Well, when I left Lincoln School, if you lived on the north side of Locust Street, you had to go to Garfield; on the south side, you went to Wiley. Now, all my classmates when I graduated from Lincoln School were on the south side of Locust. So I didn't want to leave my classmates; I gave a fictitious address.

JH: Ooooooh! And they didn't find it out?

EWING: (laughs) Didn't find it out 'til my senior year at Wiley. It was a funny thing. Well, I wanted to play football at Wiley, but something happened. There was a lull between the Laffoon brothers and what-have-you; they didn't particularly care for the blacks to play football.

JH: Oh, really?!

EWING: That's right. So I considered myself a fast, flashy halfback.

JH: (laughs)

EWING: And, of course, they let me come out, but they cut me. So, Mr. Hyte (Charlie Hyte was the principal of Booker Washington school) formed an all black, independent team, and he taught us how to play football. That's the reason I'm so enthused over the Hyte Center.

JH: Of course.

EWING: This Mr. Hyte . . . we had to practice out in back of Booker Washington school on cinders they had. But we made it. So, Mr. Hyte would take us to play football. We had to go to Indianapolis, Gary, Evansville, Owensboro, and East St. Louis to play football. But Mr. Hyte would go into his pocket to pay to take us to these various places . . . (telephone rings)

JH: We'll wait a minute, and you answer the telephone.

EWING: All right.

JH: Continuing your story, Mr. Ewing, about your football experience, this was then an all black team?

EWING: Yes.

JH: Whom did you play?

EWING: Well, we played Gary . . .

JH: But were these other black teams?

EWING: All black teams.

JH: You were never, then, allowed to really play with the Wiley football team..

EWING: No, no. No. Never. But anyway, what I'm trying to say . . . we were having a game in Owensboro on a Saturday, and we had to leave on Friday evening. So, I got permission to leave to go play football.

JH: To leave school?

EWING: To leave school early. So Mr. Lacey, the dean of boys, gave me permission. And while I was gone, Mr. Lacey sends out to this address that I had given to find out if I were really going to play football. So, when I came back Monday morning, Mr. Lacey called me to come into the office. He said, "Demetrius, we inquired about you. Where do you live?" I said, "My address is on Spruce Street." He said, "Well, we went out there to investigate, and the lady said that you didn't live there."

So, I told him the story. So, Mr. Lacey -- God bless his soul -- smiled. He said, "Well, Demetrius, since you've been a good student and have never been tardy and you come all the way across town to this school, don't do that any more. I'm going to let you off this time, but don't do that any more."
(laughs)

So, naturally, being a senior, [there was] no way for me to do it again, see? (laughs)

JH: (laughs) So, you were still in his good graces.

EWING: That's right.

JH: What was your relationship with the other students at Wiley?

EWING: Very good. I had Miss . . . oh, I can't think of the . . . Anna Hayward . . .

JH: Yes.

EWING: . . . put me as a monitor in the hall, the first -- again, to be a monitor in Wiley. That's a new up. So, Miss Hayward gave me the job (I forget now which hour it was). Then after I became a monitor

EWING: in the hall, then came my good friend, Dr. Lyda. Wesley Lyda came along, so he was on the other end. So, we took care of the basement.

JH: Did you have any difficulties with other students, white and black? Were there problems, race problems then?

EWING: There were a few minor [ones], just minor. I didn't have too much trouble with the students, because I came from a family where there was a lot of children. My daddy always taught me, "Son, when you meet a man, treat him as a man irregardless of race, color, or national origin. If you have to be an S.B., be a good one." And that's been my philosophy for all my days. I don't meet strangers; everybody's my friend until you do something to me. Then I just cut you out. I won't bother.

JH: What about other people's attitudes, though, which you couldn't control?

EWING: Well, I don't know about the other people. What do you mean "other people"?

JH: Well, I think what I mean is, there seems to have been a considerable amount of in-school racial difficulties in some schools in recent years. That goes back before integration was legislated at least.

EWING: Yes, but when you . . . if you . . . I found out this to be true. If you're a man, people are going to respect you. Don't care what your color is; just be a man. That's a way.

JH: As long as you behave yourself?

EWING: That's right; that's right. You look . . . I don't know how to explain it. Just be a man. That teaches youngsters to death. Tell them don't worry about what this one is doing or that one's doing, just be a man. You know right from wrong. Do the right thing; you'll get along.

JH: I think we all believe this. It's a question of whether other people believe it.

EWING: I don't know how you're going to educate them. I don't know how you're going to do it.

JH: All right. Now, in those days there were lots of restrictions to black people. Isn't that correct?

EWING: Right. Right.

JH: Tell us some of these.

EWING: Well, in the first place, we couldn't eat in the restaurants. You couldn't go into the motel or hotels. And actually, when I graduated from high school, they had the senior prom. It was held at the Terre Haute House, and they went around me because I was black. And I didn't get to go to the prom.

JH: So, you couldn't go?

EWING: Couldn't go 'cause I couldn't go into the Terre Haute House.

JH: Not at all?

EWING: No.

JH: What year was this?

EWING: 'Thirty-one.

JH: Nineteen hundred thirty-one. You did not go in the hotel?

EWING: No. Not for the dance.

JH: Well, when was the time when you could go into these places?

EWING: Well . . .

JH: Was it after the war World War II?

EWING: After the war . . . during the war, I remember when I came home in uniform. I went to the Terre Haute House to see Mr. Hamilton. Bill Hamilton was vice-president of the First National Bank. He and the gentleman I worked for were very, very close friends. And I would go to the . . . when I would come home on furlough, I'd go to the Terre Haute House to see Mr. Hamilton, and he always said, "Dee, do you have any money? Do you want to use my car?" He had a Packard, straight eight. And I know . . .

EWING: I remember a couple of times I came home, and I'd go over to the garage and get his car. And the fellow didn't want to let me have his car. So, Mr. Hamilton says, "Dammit. Let him have the car, because I said, 'Let him have it!'" And then, another instance came, I went to see Mr. Hamilton -- that's the second trip I made, went to see him -- and the fellow on the elevator said, "You can't ride the elevator." I said, "I want to visit Mr. Hamilton." (I'm in uniform.)

JH: Yes.

EWING: He says, "You can't ride the elevator." I said, "Why?" He said, "You just can't ride the elevator." I said, "Well, how'm I going to get up on the third floor with Mr. Hamilton? How'm I going to get up on the floor where Mr. Hamilton is?" He said, "Well, you'll have to ride the freight elevator." I said, "I'm not going to ride the freight elevator. I'll walk up."

JH: We're going to wait a minute.

Well, you say that you were asked to ride the freight elevator? Now, what about all the employees that worked in the hotel?

EWING: They had to come in the back door to come into the hotel to work. And even when we were to play -- I played in Paul Stuart's orchestra -- we had to come around . . . to come in the back door to go into the ballroom to play.

JH: You played in the ballroom.

EWING: Played in the ballroom but had to come in the back door.

JH: But you couldn't go and come by the front door or go up the elevator?

EWING: That's right. That's right. And in the basement of that hotel they had fountains down there. At one time, they had a colored fountain and a white fountain in the basement of the Terre Haute House.

JH: You know, really, we've come a long way, haven't we?

EWING: Yes, we have. Yes, we have.

Now, things are much different. Terre Haute is getting much better. It's a good place to live. I find that the relationship between the whites and the blacks are much, much better than it was 30 years ago. There was a time when you couldn't even go into any restaurant downtown to take a sandwich or get a coke. You just couldn't stop.

There was the Woolworth's ten-cent store [which] had a counter where the blacks could get food, but it was up near the front. They couldn't eat it at the counter -- at the fountain -- the counter at the back. They had two counters.

JH: Do you think the black people in Terre Haute generally today feel that their situation is better today from what it was?

EWING: I'm sure they do; because they've gotten better jobs; and they're getting more money for their work; and they are buying homes in different locations whereby years ago you wouldn't think of a black person living in Woodridge or Lincolnshire or those places like that. But today, they're spread out all over. At one time, you'd pick up the newspaper. [It would] say, "So-and-so was killed in an accident at such-and-such a location." Why you knew that was [a] black [person] because of that location.

JH: Yes.

EWING: But now, you just can't tell. It's all over. They're spread out which I'm glad to see.

JH: Do you feel that the black people are happier today than they were, or are they?

EWING: I think they are because they're getting better breaks. They are getting better educated, and they're doing more. They're doing something. They're getting into the system in which That's what they need, to get into the system.

JH: What about employment? Do they get into the unions?

EWING: Well, yes, they get into the unions. It's a funny thing though. I will . . . being the first black to join the clerks' union in Terre Haute . . . when I went to work for Mr. Jacobs at the National Tailors, he said, "Dee, I'm hiring you as a clerk, not as a janitor. We'll both do janitor work." And he says, "First, I want you to go and join the union." So, he said, "Well, let me . . . I'll interview, I'll go and intercede for you."

He goes over to the union, and he asks them to take me in. And they wouldn't say "yes" or "no."

JH: Oh, they wouldn't?

EWING: No. So, he came back and told me, he said, "Dee, they wouldn't say 'yes' or 'no.' I'm going to hire you. Go right ahead and work." I worked for one year without belonging to the union -- as a scab. I didn't particularly care to be a scab; I wanted to join the union, because I already belonged to the musicians' union. But I couldn't . . . they wouldn't take me into the clerks' union.

But anyway, after a year the business agent for the clerks' union came over to the store, and I didn't know who he was. He wanted to buy a hat. I sold him a hat; Mr. Jacobs was busy with another customer. I sold him a hat. Then, I finally sold him a suit.

He said, "Well, young man, you handle yourself quite well." He said, "We'd like to have you join the clerks' union." Then, Mr. Jacobs blew his stack. He said, "Darn it. I wanted him to join a year ago, and you wouldn't take him in. Yes, I want him to join; I'll pay his tuition, his initiation fee." He says, "How much is it?" He says, "Twenty dollars." He says, "No. You only charge the white boys ten dollars." He said, "No, it's gone up, Jake. It's gone up to twenty dollars now." "I don't care. I'll pay it. I'll pay it."

So, that's the way I . . . and when I was indoctrinated into the clerks' union, every clerk that had ever been a clerk on Wabash Avenue came to see me sworn in. And Mr. (I think the man's name was Asbury) . . . he was in charge of it. He is the man that swore me in. And he was saying he was glad to

EWING: know that he was the first to swear a black man into the clerks' union.

JH: Now, were there very many who followed?

EWING: Now, that I don't know. I don't know because there were several merchants that came to the store after Mr. Jacobs hired me. They came in and asked me what I thought about having some other black clerks. I told them I thought it would be a good idea to hire some. He said, "Well, you've done so well for yourself." I said, "Well, they can do equally as well. All they have to do . . . all they're wanting is a chance. Give 'em a chance!"

And I think that the first . . . the second one . . . now, I don't know whether she joined the clerks' union, but I think she was the stock girl in Meis's, and I think then they put her on the floor and started her to work. And so did Carl Wolf. He had a fellow there by the name of Hez Isom, a good friend of mine.

JH: What was his name?

EWING: Hezzie. Hez Isom.

JH: I-s-o-m?

EWING: That's right.

JH: Uh-huh.

EWING: And they put him on the floor. So, Rabbi Mervis at the Jewish temple . . . one Friday night, Rabbi Mervis made the remark that Mr. Jacobs had taken a step that no other merchant had taken. He said, "He has hired a black clerk." And one fellow from Carl Wolf said, "We've got one, too!" (laughs)

But he was just a stock boy. After Mr. Jacobs hired me, then they brought him up on the floor. And he was waiting on the blacks that came in. And finally, he was so good, they just turned him loose -- let him go for himself.

JH: Did you work on commission? What was your association with Mr. Jacobs?

EWING: A good friend and no commission, just straight salary. And funny thing -- before I joined the clerks' union, Mr. Jacobs was paying me the clerk's salary. And every time that he would get in the wind that they were going to increase the salaries, he would increase mine before the others got theirs -- before the union clerks got theirs increased.

JH: So, he'd beat them to the draw?

EWING: That's right; that's right. And every year at Christmas time Mr. Jacobs would give me a heck of a good bonus. He said, "Dee, you've done quite well. This is for you." And, oh, we just got along beautifully, beautifully. Mrs. Hazledine, actually, if Mr. Jacobs would come back to this earth today, I would turn the store over to him and work for him. Because he was such a nice man, we had such a good working relation. It was just fantastic!

JH: I think it's interesting that you got this job in the first place. Let's go back and tell a little something of how this came about. When did you go to work for him and why?

EWING: Well, I came downtown Usually, when I would come downtown, I'd always stop in to see Jacobs. Just a buddy. I'd come down and pay the light bill and so forth; I'd always stop in the store to see him.

JH: But how did you get to know him in the first place?

EWING: Buying clothes from him -- since 1921. I would go in to buy clothes, dollar down and a dollar a week. And he just got to the place, he never asked me how much I wanted to pay down. He knew I didn't have much money. I was . . . but he would just let me write my own ticket. And . . . you asked me about how I got started with him When I came home from service, I went into the store. I knew I was going to get married, so I asked Mr. Jacobs. I said, "Well, Jake, I'm going to get married. I want a suit of clothes." And so he said, "Well, all right, Dee. Go on, pick yourself out something. You know what you want. You know this merchandise" (because I was always in the store); Go ahead and pick yourself out something."

EWING: So, I picked out a pinstripe suit to get married in. And I think the suit at that time cost me \$30. That was a lot of money for a suit of clothes then. So he said -- he didn't ask me how much I wanted to pay down -- "When do you want it?" I told him the date. "O.K." he said and added it up.

So, he said . . . he was busy. I said, "Jake" No, he asked me would I take a pack to the post office for him. I said, "Sure, I'll take it over there for you." I said, "What happened to the fellow that worked for you?" "Oh," he said, "Dee, he had a better chance to get a job down at the South plant making more money. I couldn't pay him what they were paying him down there."

JH: This was that ordnance plant . . .

EWING: Right.

JH: . . . south of town. Correct?

EWING: That's right.

And he said . . . I said, "My God, your store is dirty. Where's your broom?" I went and swept the store out for him and dusted around for him. He was busy writing out orders, and so he said, "Would you take this pack to the post office?" I said "Sure." I took that to the post office. On the way I had a brainstorm and said to myself, "I'm going to ask him for a job when I get back. I don't have a job."

So, when I got back from the post office, I said, "Jake, why in the heck don't you give me a job?" So (he was a nervous type little fellow) he jumped up from the table where he was writing his orders, walked out on Wabash Avenue, pulled up on his pants -- he was always pulling his pants up to keep 'em up high. He was pulling them up, and he looked up and down Wabash Avenue, came back into the store, and said, "Dee, you don't want work." I said, "Heck, I don't. I'm getting married; I'm tired of playing music, running all over the country; I want to settle down." He said, "Let me give it some thought." "O.K." I just figured this was a nice way to brush me off, because we were buddies and there never was a black clerk on Wabash Avenue.

EWING: The next morning he called me. "Want to come down and help us out?" I answered, "Sure. When I get cleaned up, I'll come right down." So, I walked in the store. He said, "Well, Dee, what do you want to compensate for your work?" I said, "Oh, Jacobs. You know I don't know anything about clerking." I didn't know what the clerks were paying. I said, "I'll help you out 'til you can get someone."

"Well, that's fine. You know my wife and I talked this over last evening, and we thought it would be a good gesture on our part to hire you as a clerk. I'm not going to hire you as a janitor. We'll both do the janitor work." Anyway, I started to work for him. I worked for about, mmm, four weeks. A customer came in and said . . . Jacobs was busy [so] I said to the customer, "May I help you?" He looked at me; he says, "No. There's not a durned thing you can do for me," and walked out and slammed the door.

So, after Mr. Jacobs had finished with his customer, he asked me. He said, "Dee, what's wrong with that guy?" I said, "He just resented me waiting on him." I said, "Now, if I'm going to be detrimental to your business, I'm ready to leave right now." Mr. Jacobs said, "No, you don't leave. I'll tell you when." He said, "Dee, chances are he wouldn't have been a good customer for either one of us. Remember this one thing, there must be more good white people in the world than there are bad or you and I couldn't survive, me being a Jew and you're a Negro." And that has stuck with me all through life.

Mr. Jacobs was . . . well, he'd bawl me out, but it was all good constructive criticism. He'd point that thing in my face and shake his finger in my face -- in the back room, not in the front -- and tell me what I was doing wrong, and how I should do it. And I followed his instructions, so that's the reason I'm where I am today.

JH: So, he treated you as a gentleman?

EWING: He did.

JH: And he was a gentleman.

EWING: He was a gentleman from the word go. As I said, if you were the kind . . . he liked . . . he just loved this business. If he could come back today, I'd turn it over to him and work for him, because it made no difference. We were just buddies. If I wanted to go anyplace for two or three days, I'd say, "Mr. Jacobs, I want to get away." He'd say/ "All right. Go on."

But the funny thing . . . he would never leave the store for a vacation or anything. So, I told him, "Jacobs, you need to go away." I was with him . . . it must have been about five years [that] I'd been working for him. I knew how to run the store. I said, "Take Mrs. Jacobs and go on, take a rest." Because he'd begun to get irritable. I could tell he was. So, he said, "Where am I going?" "I don't care where you go. Go to Brazil. Just get away from here. Get out of this store." So, he and Mrs. Jacobs went down to Brown County, down to Mitchell, Indiana. And every day, he would call back to the store. "Dee, how you getting along?" "Jacobs, I'm doing all right. Don't worry."

In the meantime, the shop had called me for some kind of a measurement, something they needed. And I couldn't supply them with it. I went back to Mr. Jacobs' desk, and I couldn't find it because his desk was always a mess. But he could find anything from years back and just go over and pull it out. And I couldn't find it, so I hung up and told the shop I'd call them back. So, I finally found what they wanted, and I gave them the information. After I hung up, I went and straightened up Mr. Jacobs' desk. I straightened it up and had it nice. So when he comes back, that's the first thing he did. He went to the door and looked and saw his desk and said, "Who in the heck has been messin' around on my desk!" So I told him the story. He said, "Listen! I don't need you. Get out of here. Go on. Go on. Anybody that can't leave my desk alone when I'm gone, I don't need 'em. Get out!"

I didn't do a thing but walked over to the door and stood there and waited. I knew he didn't have anybody to help him, and he was . . . And so I waited up at the door. He proceeded to tear that desk up again. (telephone rings)

JH: So now we have a telephone -- we'll wait a minute.

JH: So, I take it Mr. Jacobs took you back?

EWING: Well, he fired me!

JH: Oh, he fired you?

EWING: He fired me, and I wouldn't quit. So, he finally came out of his office and said, "You still here?" I said, "Heck, yes. You don't have anybody to replace me. When I hired in here, I said I would work with you until you found somebody to help you. So you don't have anybody to help you." He said, "Well, I guess I was a little hasty, Dee. But darn it! Don't mess with my desk. I can't find anything when it's in apple-pie order. It has to be tore up." (laughs)

 And so, he went next door and told Rudy Shonfield at the Mid-West Rug & Linoleum store. Rudy just died laughing, and he still remembers Jacobs' firing me and I wouldn't quit.

JH: Well, did he take other vacations then after that? Did he feel more secure?

EWING: No.

JH: No?

EWING: No. No. Of course, after that, he didn't last too long. Of course, he had a heart attack and passed.

JH: All right. After his death then, what happened to you? What happened to the store?

EWING: Well, Mrs. Jacobs was . . . poor girl didn't know a thing about the store, and I had a chance to take another job. Mr. Levin asked me what I was going to do. And I told him, I said, "Well, Mr. Levin, Mrs. Jacobs is still running the store. I'm helping her. She doesn't know a thing about it, but I'm going to stay with her until she locks the door." He said, "Well, Dee. You have to look out for Dee." I said, "Well, by the same token she doesn't know a thing about it. I wouldn't leave her holding the bag. The

EWING: lady doesn't know anything about the business, so I'm going to stay with her."

JH: Which Mr. Levin was this?

EWING: A.N.

JH: A.N. Yes, indeed.

So, you stayed then, on?

EWING: Stayed on with Mrs. Jacobs. She started to liquidate the stock. Then, she asked me one day, she said, "Dee, would you like to buy the National Tailors?" She said, "I'd like to see it continued." I said, "Well, sure, I'd love to have the store."

"Well," she said, "We've gotten the stock down now where I think you can handle it." And that's the way I purchased the store.

JH: This gets into a description of what you really did. Now, was this materials that were made into clothes on measurement, custom-made materials, or did you have suits on the rack?

EWING: No, no, no. Everything was made. Custom tailored.

JH: Where was it tailored?

EWING: Chicago and St. Louis. We had two shops -- cut, make and trim houses. We purchased our material by the bolt. The way we operate, you come in, we measure you, you pick out the material that you wanted, and we would cut off enough material to make a suit and send it to the shop -- cut, make and trim houses. They'd make it up and send it back to us. Then, if there were any alterations to be made, well, we could take care of it right here.

JH: So, then you really do your own alterations?

EWING: That's right, that's right.

JH: Did you just learn this by learning it, so to speak?

EWING: Yes, I guess you're right. (laughs)

EWING: Well now, Mr. Jacobs knew quite a bit about tailoring himself. And he had . . . a lot of times he would get me in the back room there (we're in the back room again) twisting his finger in my face and telling me this and telling me that. So I caught on a lot of . . . like a lot of angles from him. And I still say he was a beautiful, beautiful man to work for.

JH: That's wonderful.

Going back to your merchandise again, now you sold hats?

EWING: Not at first.

JH: Not at first.

EWING: I think I was with Mr. Jacobs about five years before the Adam hat man came in . . . called on us; and we were the first in Terre Haute to sell the Adam hat. When the Adam hat first came out, it came out, I think, for \$3.95 for a hat. And we were the first to sell the Adam hat. Then, after a few years, they came out with a hat called the Bianchi, and there was a road man that came in to show us how to trim the window. His name was Frank Bianchi. And he worked up to be a big man in the Adam Hat corporation, so they named this hat after Frank. That's where the Bianchi hat came from.

JH: So, he really was just a salesman originally?

EWING: He was just a salesman originally, but he was another man like Jacobs. A fine guy. He just came in and spent the whole day. Taught us how to trim a window and how to merchandise hats, and it was something fantastic.

JH: Tell us something about the price change now. From the time you first went to work for him, a suit cost \$30, is that right?

EWING: (laughs) Well, thirty dollars, that was a top grade. That was . . .

JH: What was the low grade?

EWING: Oh, about \$18.50 to \$25.

JH: You could get a tailor-made suit for \$18 to \$20?

EWING: That's right. \$18 to \$25. Then \$30 was the top grade of merchandise.

JH: Now, this depended . . . did this depend on the fabric?

EWING: That's right, that's right.

JH: And what would this fabric be?

EWING: All wool.

JH: Was this gabardines and . . .

EWING: You could get gabardines, flannels, and . . . oh, just about anything you can think of, we carried it. And, of course, Mr. Jacobs was very persnickety about what he purchased. He had to have the best quality merchandise. And we had a woolen man from Chicago, Mr. Zanger, Phil Zanger, would call on him. And they would get in some of the darnedest arguments about materials that you ever heard of. And Jacobs wouldn't . . . if it wasn't right . . . right type of material, he wouldn't purchase it. It had to be up to snuff.

JH: So it really was quality merchandise?

EWING: Quality merchandise. Right.

JH: And when the suits came to you then after the measurements had been tailored elsewhere and sent back, how finished were they?

EWING: Completely finished. Now, there were people we had to have try-ons once, at some time. For a hard-to-fit person, we'd have a try-on -- a skeleton . . . have a try-on and then send it back to the shop. They'd finish it, and it'd come back within In other words, there'd be two fittings.

JH: So, it was sent back twice?

EWING: Right, right, right.

JH: Is this parcel post or how was that shipped?

EWING: Parcel post at that time. That's all we could send, parcel post.

JH: All right. Now, take these fabrics . . . I'm interested in the progress of the clothing industry or the change. Maybe it's not progress. Is it progress?

EWING: (laughs) I don't know. (more laughs)

JH: In the changes in fibers and in fabrics and in price?

EWING: Well, there's a big change in the fabrics. However, we don't go in for the synthetic. We don't buy it. We buy all wool, silk and wool, dacron in the wool, and that's what all we deal with. And we've got shops, houses we buy our materials from -- New York and Chicago -- and they know that we don't want this other stuff.

JH: All polyesters and doubleknits.

EWING: Yeah, yeah. Doubleknits, we don't deal in any at all.

JH: But now the dacron is . . .

EWING: Dacron and wool is a pretty good deal.

JH: Do you feel that's better . . . is this superior to all wool?

EWING: No. Your all wool, if you get a good piece of all . . . piece of wool is superior to anything that you can buy.

JH: A really good piece?

EWING: That's right. That's right. And we have fellows that go to Europe -- England, rather -- and bring back materials that they buy, that they bring back for a couple of suits for themselves. It's a pleasure to work with nice materials.

JH: So they bring the fabric to you then and then you have it made.

EWING: That's right. I measure 'them and take care of it.

JH: How much does it take for an average man's suit?

EWING: Average man, it takes about 3-1/2 yards of goods, 58" to 60" wide. And it takes a little more than it did in a 54". We don't like to fool with 54" goods.

JH: I thought it was always 54".

EWING: No, no. Oh, no.

JH: Not today?

EWING: No, it never was!

JH: Really?

EWING: No. Not for a man.

JH: Well, maybe it's the difference between men's and women's fabrics.

EWING: There is. There is. There is. We just don't want . . . we really don't fool with it, 54" goods.

JH: So, 58" to 60" . . .

EWING: Fifty-eight to sixty inches wide.

JH: All right. How much is a suit these days?

EWING: The price?

JH: Yes.

EWING: Oh! Hold your hat. It's from \$285 to \$300.

JH: Mercy.

EWING: Yep.

JH: Up from \$18 to \$30.

EWING: That's right. That's right. And, well, your labor has gone haywire; you pay a big price for labor. And there was a time that labor would tell you -- tell us rather -- that by August of such and such a date,

EWING: the price was going up. But today they don't do that. They just raise 'em whenever they feel like they should get more. You send a suit out; they just raise the price, and you get it back. Which isn't fair!

JH: Well, that's the way it is, I guess.

EWING: That's right. I guess that's the American way.

JH: Well, now haven't the fabric prices also raised?

EWING: Oh, my gosh, yes. Yes, yes. I was saying . . . I like about the same quality merchandise, but it's gotten to the place now it's gone out of sight. The average fellow cannot pay the price for a good suit. He will . . . who wants to pay that price, but you just can't afford it. And we're sitting on a keg. We don't know which way to go.

JH: Well, now what is the business today? This is one of the big questions. You're in a very specialized business.

EWING: Right. And fellows there . . . there are a lot of people that still like good quality merchandise. And they will come in here. If they want a nice suit, they'll come to me to take care of it. But we don't get the run-of-the-mill fellows that want to get a tailor-made suit that run in and say, "I want a suit of clothes." We don't get that type of trade like we used to have. There was a time for Easter . . . well, my God, every man had to have a new Easter suit. Well, he was going to spend \$25 or \$30 for a suit. And even after it got up to \$100, they would still purchase which wasn't too bad. To \$125, they were still buying. But now it's getting to the place it's ridiculous.

JH: Well, who is your customer? Is he white or black or both?

EWING: Mostly, white.

JH: Are these older people who have been with you a long time?

EWING: Right, right.

JH: What happens when they die off?

EWING: Well, that's the question. That's the 64-thousand-dollar question. (laughs) Well, we still have some young, off-the-street customers come in that don't mind paying the price. But they're far and few between. They're not as affluent as they used to be.

JH: Do you think this is word-of-mouth publicity then? Do you advertise?

EWING: Oh, yes. I used to, but I think that the word-of-mouth has gotten around, even over into Illinois. I would say that 70% of our business comes from Illinois.

JH: Is that right?

EWING: Oh, yes.

JH: Where in Illinois?

EWING: Casey, Lawrenceville . . .

JH: Paris, maybe?

EWING: Paris, and Charleston.

JH: Oh. Robinson?

EWING: Robinson, sure, we get customers from Robinson.

JH: What about the hat business? There's been a long time when hats weren't so much in style.

EWING: They're coming back. Hats are coming back big. We get these boys to cut their hair, and hats are coming back. (laughs)

No. We've done a fairly decent job on hats. I'm well pleased with my hats, and, of course, we carry a lot of high-class, high-style hats now. And the fellas come in here that want a good hat. They'll come here.

JH: How much is a hat these days?

EWING: Well, all we can get!

JH: (laughs)

EWING: I'll say, \$35, \$38. From \$10, \$38, \$39, \$50.

JH: You mean I could come in here and buy a hat?

EWING: That's right.

JH: For \$10?

EWING: Yes. How many would you like to buy today?

JH: What kind of a hat am I going to get for \$10?

EWING: An Adam hat.

JH: Is it a good hat?

EWING: Sure, it's a good hat. If it weren't, I wouldn't be carryin' it.

JH: All right. What's the difference in the price then?

EWING: There's a difference in the quality of the merchandise. Now, we've got the Bianchi, and we've got the Biltmore. It's a Canadian beaver hat. And that's your top-grade, very fine hat; and we've carried this Biltmore line for about five years. And it's made in Canada, but it's a very, very fine hat.

JH: It's been my experience that a good felt hat is almost indestructible.

EWING: That's right.

JH: They're very durable. They'll take a lot of abuse.

EWING: Right.

JH: Do you re-block hats?

EWING: No. My brother does. Not the one just left out of here, but my other brother that's in the hospital. And he's the hat cleaner and blocker, and they do a superb job. They can take a hat that's all beat up, and it looks darned near like a new hat when it comes back. And they don't charge too much -- \$7.50.

JH: Now you're here alone?

EWING: Right.

JH: What happened after you bought the business from Mr. Jacobs and when was this?

EWING: In 1956 I believe. Yeah, '56.

JH: And you were on Wabash Avenue then?

EWING: On Wabash.

JH: And when did you leave Wabash Avenue?

EWING: Let me see . . . I've been so many places since Mr. Jacobs died. They kicked me around like a football.

JH: Oh, have you? Well, where all then have you been?

EWING: We left 509 Wabash. That's the original place for the National Tailors. Then we moved upstairs, 517-1/2 Wabash upstairs. We darned near starved to death upstairs. I never want to open up any kind of a business upstairs.

Then we came down to 33 South 5th. We stayed there for about four years. My lease ran out, and they kicked me out. That's when they tore down all those buildings on South 5th Street.

JH: Yes.

EWING: Then I moved across the street in Ray Compton's building. I was there about a year and then it was sold. And I had to move to 501 Ohio -- on the corner of 5th and Ohio. I stayed there about a year. And then all heck broke loose; I had to move and I moved here. So I told Mr. Richard Beard. I said, "Now, Mr. Beard, if you ask me to move again, I'm going to walk out and you can just have the building. I'm going to have . . . you got it!" Got the business.

JH: What is this address?

EWING: Eleven South 6th.

JH: Eleven South 6th. There are many buildings being torn down around here. Has this affected your business, do you think?

EWING: Yes. Yes, it has. Well, we don't have the traffic. We don't have people come downtown. Everyone's going to the shopping centers, and it's hurt us.

JH: All right. Now this gets into our current questions about Terre Haute. What do you feel is the outlook for the downtown area in Terre Haute?

EWING: Well, I've been to two of the meetings that they're proposing to build the downtown Terre Haute. If it goes through, I'm thinking it will help the downtown Terre Haute. But I just don't see how they're going to pull it. I'm from Missouri -- you have to show me. (laughs)

JH: (laughs) You're from Tennessee. (more laughs) Well, you're 70 years old.

EWING: Seventy-one.

JH: Seventy-one. Are you going to stay indefinitely?

EWING: Yes. I don't see retiring just to sit down and just dry up. I like to see people. You know I can sit in this little place here and the girls go by and the fellows go by and . . . actually, it's a pleasure. A lot of fellows come in here, and they say to me, "Oh, you know all the girls?" "Well, why not? Some of 'em I know, some I don't know, but they go by me and just wave as they go by." And you know I'd rather see it that way than to have the girls go by and say, "That ol' S.B. I don't like him." But they go by; they all give me a big smile, and they wave, and some peck on the window if I'm not lookin'. Peck on the window as they go past. And I appreciate that.

JH: Well, you're a friendly person, and this is what makes your business, I believe.

EWING: Well, it helps. That helps a lot, tremendously. I still say what my daddy taught me years back. I just can't get around it. I like . . . I love people and, seemingly, some of 'em like me. Because . . .

EWING: one fella was in here last week, and a very attractive girl passed. I don't know who she is; I don't know. But she passed, she smiled and gave a big wave, and I waved back to her. And he said, "Well, who was that?" "I don't know who she was." "Oh, Dee, you're lying to me." I said, "No. I don't know." He says, "I'm going to tell your wife." "She knows it." (laughs heartily)

JH: Now that we've laid the groundwork, so to speak, about what you're doing today, I'd like to go back a little and kind of trace your career from the time you first went to work. What was your first job? What did you first do?

EWING: Well, when I was in Tennessee, I worked in a tobacco factory.

JH: As a child?

EWING: Yes.

JH: How old were you then?

EWING: I must have been about nine or ten.

JH: Ah, what did you do there?

EWING: Helped to move tobacco baskets around in the . . . what'd they call it? . . . the warehouse. You had to . . . everyone had to work to survive. We had to work.

JH: Yours was a big family.

EWING: Yes. Seven boys and two girls.

JH: Well, now were there no child labor laws?

EWING: No, not in those days.

JH: Did you go to school in Tennessee?

EWING: Yes. I went to the fourth grade there.

JH: So this was after hours or when?

EWING: After hours. And before school and after school.

JH: And what did you get paid for this?

EWING: Hmpf. About 50 cents a week. Oh, it was terrible. That's the reason dad left there. He says, "It's no place for me to raise a family. I can't make it." And he was workin' at some kind of a factory. I've forgotten what he was doin' there. After . . . but he couldn't make it.

JH: Well now, did the job opportunity on the railroad turn up for Terre Haute specifically? No, I believe you said you went to Indianapolis first.

EWING: No, he went to Indianapolis first.

JH: He went to Indianapolis first.

EWING: And he came back to Terre Haute. Yeah. That was the railroad job he got over in Indianapolis.

END OF SIDE 1

TAPE 1-SIDE 2

JH: So your father came to Indianapolis to work on the railroad. How did he happen on to this job?

EWING: Some friend of his from Indianapolis who was living there told him . . . wrote to him and told him about this job opening.

JH: That this was going (laughingly) to be the land of golden opportunity?

EWING: That's right. That's right. And he readily packed a little suitcase and took off. Then after he got to Indianapolis, he didn't like it too well over there. It was too big a city, because where we came from was a small town in Tennessee. It was a suburb of Clarksville. But anyway, he didn't like the big city, so he came over here. That's the way he got into Terre Haute.

JH: And then he sent for you?

EWING: That's right.

JH: How much time elapsed?

EWING: I imagine about a year.

JH: So you were alone and what kept you in groceries at home then?

EWING: Well, my mother took in laundry. She used to . . . for the . . . what d'ya call these homes for the children? . . . orphans' homes . . .

JH: Oh, an orphans' home.

EWING: Orphans' home. And it wasn't too far from us. And she would take in washings for different people in this orphans' home. That's where we got a little money to survive. Of course, we had a little plot of land where we'd do our farming. We'd raise green beans, what-have-you; and she did an awful lot of canning. So we had food.

JH: Well, then you came to Terre Haute. Did she continue to work after she came to Terre Haute?

EWING: The same type of business. Laundry work.

JH: At home?

EWING: At home. Yeah.

JH: What was the charge for laundry in those days? Do you have any idea?

EWING: I don't recall what they'd give I know she didn't make too much because . . .

JH: Well, your father was making \$100 . . .

EWING: A hundred dollars, oh, he was rich! He was makin' a hundred dollars a month.

JH: A month!

EWING: Yeah. A hundred dollars a month.

JH: That's almost \$20 a week.

EWING: Yeah. Yeah.

JH: Did you have a job then when you came to Terre Haute? What about your brothers and sisters? Where were you in the line-up?

EWING: I'm the oldest boy. My sister . . . the two sisters were the older. And, of course, the second girl I didn't know her. She passed, oh, several months after childbirth but I didn't . . . See, I never knew her.

But my oldest sister had married before we left Tennessee. She never lived in Terre Haute. She lived in Jackson, Mississippi. And she raised . . . reared her family in Jackson. But she would come to visit us each summer and wanted to know how mother was getting along and how we were all gettin' along. And she brought some boxing gloves up here for all these boys. She bought boxing gloves. So we . . . we knew how to take care of ourselves but well with the dukes.

JH: I think that's interesting, because boxing it seems was one of the early breakthroughs for black people. Incidentally, I would like to clarify this. We used to say "colored people" or "Negroes;" and today, one says "black." Why the change?

EWING: Now, that's a good question. I don't know. There was a time if you said "black" you had a fight on your hands. But now, I think the people . . . after all, it is the black race just as white race or black race or brown race or yellow race. So, that's what it is. But a lot of people prefer being called a Negro. It's just a matter of opinion. I don't care what you call me, as long as you don't call me too late for breakfast. (laughs)

JH: (laughs) Do you object to being . . . using the words, "colored" or "Negro"?

EWING: No. No. I don't care. It doesn't make any difference to me. As I still say, I . . . it really doesn't because . . . well, if you get down to the final analysis, color . . . some people just resent being called colored, because they were called that so many years. And they just resent that now. But I . . . I don't care.

JH: Well, maybe this goes along with the philosophy that black is beautiful.

EWING: Right, right.

JH: And this is all right. If this helps your own self-image and helps people feel right about themselves, then this is right, isn't it?

EWING: That's right. That's right.

JH: O.K. So, you came to Terre Haute then when you were about twelve with . . . how many now were in the family?

EWING: There were five . . .

JH: Five boys.

EWING: Six boys.

JH: Six boys left now. And the daughter was gone.

EWING: The daughter was gone, yes.

JH: Did you have a job while you were a young child here in Terre Haute?

EWING: Yes, I shined shoes at a barber shop.

JH: Where?

EWING: After school. One place over on 3rd Street -- 3rd and . . . 3rd and . . . old haymarket used to be over on 3rd Street there. Third and Walnut, I guess it was. Since they've torn down so many buildings, I can't find . . . I can't remember where I was.

JH: But it was very close downtown?

EWING: Yes, yes. Then I started to work after school at the . . . for the Gus Theodore shoeshine parlor on South 7th Street. I worked there for him for a number of years. And we worked there for \$7 a week and always the tips.

JH: Did you get many tips?

EWING: Yes. You could do pretty good with tips. Five cents. A shoeshine was only ten cents. And then you'd probably get a nickel or dime from each person.

JH: Well, that's pretty good. I mean that's a good percentage at least.

EWING: Sure, sure. And there was . . . a funny thing, there was a fellow, a barber named Logan who had a barbershop on North 7th Street. He'd come in every Saturday night and get his shoes shined. And he was always good for 25 cents. He always paid a quarter for a shoeshine. And the boys all tried to wait for Logan. (laughs) They'd try (laughs) . . . one day we almost ran over each other, trying to get to Logan. We saw him coming and everybody broke for Logan, because we knew that was . . . we called it Kris Kringle. .(laughs)

JH: (joins in laughter) How many of you were there working there then?

EWING: Must have been four. Four of us working there.

JH: There were four shoeshine boys there! And when . . . what kind of hours did you keep?

EWING: From 7 Saturday morning until 7 Saturday night. During the week we'd close, oh, about 7 o'clock I imagine. But on Saturday, we stayed until 10 p.m.. I'm sorry, Saturday night . . .

JH: Saturday 'til 10.

EWING: . . . 'til 10 o'clock. Yeah.

We'd come back on Sundays from 7 o'clock 'til about 3 Sunday afternoon. And you were busy all the time that you were there most of the time.

JH: What's the secret of a good shoeshine?

EWING: Just to know how to apply that polish and how to brush.

JH: Elbow grease?

EWING: Elbow grease is the thing. Yeah. And . . .

JH: Did your rags make any difference? The cloths?

EWING: Yes. The cloth makes a difference. And so do your brushes. You have to keep those brushes clean in order to get a good, high finishing. Yeah.

JH: What's the secret of a spit polish?

EWING: Oh, that's just a lot of jive.

JH: Is it?

EWING: Yeah. You can take water and do the same thing. We used to take plain water and put a little coloring in there (laughs), and they'd say, "What is that you're putting on that shoe to make it shine?" We say, "We call it 'jobo.' That's jobo."

JH: How do you spell that?

EWING: J-o-b-o.

JH: Jobo. All right.

Well, you worked then as a shoeshine boy while you were in school.

EWING: Yes.

JH: Now, you got out of Wiley. What were you doing then?

EWING: Then I'm in the band now. I'm . . .

JH: When did you go into music?

EWING: Well, I went into music in the Lincoln School band. That's the little group up there you see on the wall. That's the beginning of my musical career. That's the Lincoln School band. That must have been about 1927 when I started music. And . . .

JH: Was your family musical?

EWING: No. None of 'em. But my dad loved to see parades. And he took me to a parade one time in Clarksville, Tennessee. There was a minstrel show comin' to town. They used to be on top of a wagon

EWING: putting on a show, going down the street playing. And I saw a fellow up there was playing a low clarinet. And it caught my eye. I didn't know what it was. But I decided that's what I wanted to play.

And when I came to Terre Haute and went to Lincoln School, Mrs. Evangeline Harris was the originator. She organized the school band. And I said . . . she wanted to know what we wanted to play, and I said, "I don't know what the instrument is, but it's a little black stick with silver keys." She says, "That's the clarinet . . ." I didn't even know what the instrument was. She said, "That's the clarinet." "Well, that's what I want to play." So, I . . . they signed me up for the clarinet. So I went home and told my mother that Mrs. Harris was organizin' a school band and I'd like to get in the band. So, I said, "Now, we have to pay for the instrument, paying a dollar down and fifty cents a week, to pay for these instruments."

JH: But this would then purchase it for you?

EWING: Purchase it, yeah. So my wife . . . my mother gave the last four dollars she had in the house to purchase this instrument -- as a down payment for this instrument for me. She had taken in this laundry on a scrub board. I don't know whether you remember that old brass scrub board.

JH: Yes, indeed.

EWING: That's what she did, and my father, seeing her spending her money for an instrument for me, he said, "Daisy, it's just a waste of time and a waste of money to fool with that boy with a horn." And so mother said, "Well, he wants it; let's give him a try -- let him try it." So that's the way I got started in music. And I kept my . . . after I started I got . . . did so well with the clarinet, the Paul Stuart asked me to join his orchestra which was a dance band where we made big money. Seven dollars a night, big money. So that you could . . .

JH: You mean each of you made \$?? Well, then . . .

EWING: Seven dollars. Yeah.

JH: In that time, perhaps that was. How old were you at this point?

EWING: Aaaaah.

JH: Were you in high school?

EWING: Yes. I was in high school. I don't recall.

JH: Well, so you were of high-school age.

EWING: Oh, yes.

JH: By this time then, you had been playing the clarinet how long?

EWING: Well, '27 . . . you get me . . . these dates here, you're crossin' me up.

JH: Well, no, I didn't mean to. I'm merely trying to establish how long you had . . . what experience you'd had by the time you started playing in the dance band.

EWING: Well, I went along pretty fast, because I was interested in music; and in fact, there were several boys playing the clarinet that I was teaching while I was learning in school.

JH: Did this Miss Harris . . . was she your sole teacher?

EWING: No. She was a music teacher in the school, but Mr. Stanton, that's the fellow that . . . what's his name? . . . Wayne, not Wayne Stanton . . . But anyway, he was the music supervisor for music for all the schools in Terre Haute.

JH: In the school system. And did he come to the school periodically?

EWING: Come to the school periodically to teach us how to play and what he wanted us to do. And he got . . . some of the boys were a little slow in learning the clarinet, and I wanted to learn so fast so badly, when I would go home after taking my lesson at school, I'd sit down and practice two or three hours after I got home. And so my mother wouldn't . . . 'cause there's a lot of squeakin' and squawkin' of a clarinet, you know, but she'd never say a word. Just let me go ahead and do all I wanted to do. But anyway, these two or three fellows that I would teach would pay

EWING: me 25¢ an hour to teach them how to play what I was playing. So, I did quite well. I came up pretty fast 'cause I was interested.

JH: Certainly.

EWING: Then, after playing the clarinet, I bought a saxophone on my own. And my mother objected to me buying a saxophone, she said, because you don't make that kind of money. I was still shinin' shoes at the shinin' parlor, you know. So I purchased a saxophone, and that's when Paul Stuart asked me to join his outfit. So then, I just kept going right on up.

JH: How much does a saxophone cost?

EWING: In those days, a used saxophone cost me \$90. Today, the same horn will cost you \$500. Now, I've got the Buscher 400 that I bought brand new from Sterchi Music Company . . . must have been ten years ago. I paid four and a quarter (\$425). Now they tell me that same horn is \$900. And so, I can get \$900 with my horn just like that, right now.

JH: Do you still play?

EWING: No. I still keep my horn though. I'm afraid to start playing it again, because I might get the urge to get back on the road.

JH: You are afraid of this?

EWING: I'm afraid that I . . . music is fascinating. And I just love it. I made so many friends in my musical background. I run into people every day. "You remember playing at Switz City?" "You remember being down in Jasonville?" "You remember . . ." Oh, lordy, it just brings back wonderful memories. Fond memories.

JH: Well, I . . . this is part of your life.

EWING: It is. And I went to Indianapolis two months ago. I went to the State House, and a girl came up to me. She said, "Oh, Dee, do you remember me?" I said, "I'm sorry. I don't believe I do." So, "I'm so-and-so. I'm from Switz City. Don't you remember playing down there?" That was 30 years ago!

EWING: She said, "Don't you remember playing at the Oodle Inn?" I said, "I remember the Oodle Inn, but I don't remember you." "I'm so-and-so." "Oh, yes. I remember you." I didn't remember her.

JH: No.

EWING: They remember you from being . . . not that I was so good, but I tried to play what the people wanted, and I tried to play it the way they wanted it. And I would go into these different places to play. And one fellow said to me, he said, "Now, I'll tell you what I want you to do. I want this and I want that and I want this." So I immediately told him, "Well, I'm not accustomed to working under those conditions. So I'm in here to make you money. So now, you leave it to me; let me run the band and you run the bar." Well, he stood and looked at me a while and said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You let me run the band; you run the bar." And so I said, "Well, what I'm saying when there's no one in here when I start to playing, I'll play hard, a lot of numbers. But after the crowd gets here, I'm gonna slow down." He said, "Why are you gonna slow down?" I said, "So you can make some money. People can't buy drinks dancing." "Oh. Oh, I see what you mean! O.K."

So, that's been my philosophy. When the house is . . . when I get the people in, then I slow down. Take a lot of breaks. Let them drink because I'm looking for the house, and I told this guy, I said, "If the house makes money, you can pay me. If not, you don't need me."

JH: Well, that gets back to where you played. Now you said that this was Paul Stuart's band, but you apparently were the director of the band. Is that right?

EWING: No, after I left Paul Stuart. See, Paul was a city fireman, and they . . . I was with him, oh, a number of years. And after he broke up his group, then I formed my own little group. Smaller group.

JH: And what did you call your group?

EWING: Royal Syncopators.

JH: Royal Syncopators. And where did you play?

EWING: Oh, Switz City, Sullivan, Jasonville, Vincennes, Oaktown . . .

JH: What kind of establishment was this? Were these bars? Taverns?

EWING: Some were bars and some were dance halls. Just regular dances.

JH: Was this white or black?

EWING: All white.

JH: All white?

EWING: Yeah.

JH: Didn't you play for any of the black organizations?

EWING: When they had a small party here in Terre Haute. Now, we played for the -- there was a club called The Joysters [which] would give a dance about once a year. Then we'd play for those people. They'd have it at the Deming and sometimes at the Terre Haute House. Most of the time they were at the Deming, and we played for that group.

JH: But you really were playing for white organizations then?

EWING: Most of them. Yes.

JH: Now, how long did you have this band then?

EWING: Let's see . . . [19]31 up until, hmpf, well, after I went to service . . .

JH: When did you go into the service?

EWING: [Nineteen hundred] forty-three.

JH: Did you have it until you went into the service then?

EWING: Yes. Then when I came out of service, I re-organized. I picked up the same group, and we worked up until . . . about 10 years ago.

JH: 'Til 10 years ago!

EWING: Yeah. Yeah.

JH: How big a group was it? How many people?

EWING: Four pieces. Four pieces.

JH: Four pieces.

EWING: Yeah. Piano, saxophone, drums and singer.

JH: This is an easy group to manage, isn't it?

EWING: Oh, yes. Yes. I wouldn't want to manage a big group today. (laughs)

JH: Well now, did you play an instrument while you were in the service?

EWING: Yes, oh, yes. My spec number was 4 . . . they have a "spec" number.

JH: Now, what do you mean by that?

EWING: That's a saxophone musician's number. They have a spec number. Well, I played the saxophone and the clarinet in the army band.

JH: In the army band.

EWING: We were the 66th Medical Training Battalion Band.

JH: And what was your rank?

EWING: Pfc. They told me when I was taking basic training over at Blackstone, Virginia, that I'd never make it any higher than a Pfc if I were to go into the band. But the company commander said, "Well, Ewing, with your education -- with your educational background -- you should go to OCS (Officers' Candidates School) and go right on up the line." I said, "Sir, I am not interested in the army. It's a different line for me." He said, "What do you do in civilian life?" I said, "I'm a musician." "Well," he said, "I'll tell you what to do. If you'll soldier for me, I'll see to it that you get in that band that we got here. And they've got a good one!"

EWING: "Fine!" I tightened up then. And he stuck to his word and after I finished my 11 weeks of basic training, then he had me transferred over to the band. So, that's how I got into the army band. But he told me, "You'll never get any higher than a Pfc unless someone gets busted." I said, "That's all right with me," 'cause I love music, and I used to go by that hall and hear those guys practicing and playing such fine music. Oh, I just died to get over there. When they sent me over there, I was in my seventh heaven. And that's where -- after getting into the band -- that's how I met my wife.

JH: Where did you meet your wife?

EWING: In Richmond, Virginia. Well, it wasn't Richmond. At the camp -- Camp Pickett, Virginia. I didn't know that she was looking at me 'cause we used to play for the . . . at the PX, not the PX . . . oh, what they call these recreation halls . . .

JH: Well, like an Officers' Club or was it . . .

EWING: No, recreation hall, I'll say that. And she was one of the nurses (she was a staff nurse), and they used to bring a busload of students down to hear these concerts we were putting on. And she was in charge of them.

So, I didn't know her from Adam and this friend of mine, a saxophone player, was a rounder, would always be around. He'd gone around; so he said to me, he said, "Dee, I met a nice little nurse up at Birdville, and she said she wants to meet you." I said, "What do you mean, she wants to meet me?" "I said she wants to meet you! She wants me to bring you up there next Wednesday." I said, "O.K."

Now, I wasn't really interested. I just brushed him off like that. Wednesday came around, he said, "Aren't you ready to go?" I said, "Where we going?" I'd forgotten about it. He said, "Boy, I'm tellin' you, I got a nice little nurse up there I want you to meet." I said, "Jonesey, don't you put me on a King Kong." You know these soldier boys were always pulling some kind of shenanigans. And so, finally I got dressed and went up there with him.

EWING: I'm sitting out in the hall waiting for this young lady to come out. Here comes a little girl down the hall. He says, "That's not the one. That's not the one." Finally, here she comes. He says, "Here she comes. This is Miss Cox." I said, "Jones, you're kiddin' me!" He says, "No. That's Miss Cox." And I was dead. That's where I . . . she said, "Hello," and that smile just killed me. I just melted down. And I was there 30 days, and we shipped out. Took me from Virginia to Texas. And I was in Texas 19 months. We corresponded, and so she wanted to get married. We talked about it several times. I said to myself "Well, she will not wait until I get out of the service; I do not want to get married to anybody while I'm in service; I want to wait until I get out of service, and we'll see what we can do."

So after I got out, I went on to Virginia, and we got married. I don't know why I waited for the 27th of December instead of gettin' married on the 25th. I got wedded on the 27th (laughing) and then I had to buy two gifts, the 25th and the 27th. I wasn't smart. Yeah.

JH: So, then you really hadn't known each other very long before you were sent away.

EWING: No.

JH: But you knew this was for you.

EWING: That was it.

JH: And what is your wife's name?

EWING: Mary Cox.

JH: Mary Cox.

EWING: Ewing.

JH: Ewing.

EWING: She was . . . that was her maiden name, Cox.

JH: Yes.

EWING: Her real name is Mary Elizabeth Cox and
But a funny thing, when I told her daddy what I planned

EWING: to do . . . he was a very fine gentleman. I'd met all of her brothers. Now, she has a . . . the oldest girl in a large family, she's got five brothers, and they're all younger than she is. Just like my family. So, Mr. Cox said to me, he says, "Well, Demetrius, you're gonna marry my daughter and take her 'way out west." He says, "The only thing, I think a lot of you; I think as much of you as I do any of my boys. You're one of the boys. But if you're gonna take her out there, the only thing I'm telling you -- gonna tell you, don't hit her."

JH: Oh.

EWING: I said, "What if she hits me?" "Oh, that's different!" So, I says, "O.K." So when I . . . I said to Mr. Cox, "Now, we're not going to get married until she comes out to Indiana to meet my folks. If she's gonna like my mother and father, we're gonna make it; if not, we'll just forget about it."

So, she comes out. My daddy liked her 'cause we only had one sister and the sister was living away from us. They were glad to have her. Oh, they opened . . . open arms. And so, when we got married, my daddy gave me \$25 and a claw hammer. I said, "Dad, what's the hammer for?" "If she gives you any trouble, knock her in the head." (laughs)

So, I'm between two. One said don't hit her and one said, hit her. So I don't know what to do. But we've gotten along nicely. We work together and she's been a real trooper. And when we decide to do something, we weigh it pro and con; and we've done fairly decently for two young . . .

JH: You had already decided apparently that you wanted to come back to Terre Haute?

EWING: Yes, I . . . I really . . . if I had known today what I . . . if I'd known then what I know today, I would have stayed in Richmond. But at the time, it wasn't too good. It didn't look too good for blacks.

JH: Well, there was still a lot of discrimination.

EWING: That's right. But I thought that I could do better in Terre Haute and that's the reason she decided to come on out here with me.

JH: She didn't mind leaving home?

EWING: No. No. She didn't mind it, because she was the first It's a funny thing, we were the first in several instances. She was the first black nurse to work for the V.N.A.

JH: Is that right?

EWING: Yes.

JH: In Terre Haute?

EWING: In Terre Haute.

JH: Did she go to work as soon as you came back to Terre Haute?

EWING: That's right. She came here in . . . well, we were married a year before she came out here. She had a job to finish up in Virginia, so I think it was about a year before she came out here. She came out here, and she applied at the V.N.A. for a job.

JH: That's the Visiting Nurse Association?

EWING: Yes, that's right. And they didn't have an opening, but they said, "We can let you work during vacations." So, she worked during the vacations. She did so well that they made a place for her. And she worked for the V.N.A. for 21 years.

JH: Is that right?

Do you have any children?

EWING: We had one son. We lost him. He was a graduate of Florida A. & M., that high-stepping band. That's his picture there (pointing) with the trumpet. He was a very talented musician. Graduated from Wiley, went to Florida A. & M., Tallahassee, graduated from that school with honors, went to New York, and taught school there for three years in the system. The teachers went on strike in New York. (You know the teachers went on a big strike.) When they settled up, they cut out music and art. So that threw him out of work. So, I have a friend that was in the same army band with me in Richmond, Virginia, and he was the first black to be music supervisor in the school system.

JH: In the south, too!

EWING: In the south -- in Richmond, Virginia. So I called "Little Joe." We called . . . his name is Joe Kennedy. We always called him "Little Joe," because he was only about four feet tall. I called "Little Joe," and I said, "Little Joe, Dee, Jr. is out of a job. Can you help him?"

"Yes. Tell Little Dee to call Uncle Joe."

He called him. Called him down to Richmond, Virginia, gave him a job in the John F. Kennedy High School as band director. John F. Kennedy was beautiful, air-conditioned . . . a beautiful school. So, when he went over for an interview with the principal of the school, I went with him. And he said, "Now, Mr. Ewing, we've got a program we're instituting, and we want it off the ground in two years." And "If there's anything that you need, just request it. We'll give you anything that you need." Very good.

JH: What kind of program was this going to be now?

EWING: Well, something in music. I don't know what it was. Something.

JH: All right. But it was an innovation?

EWING: That's right.

But anyway, he was there six months and got hit by a car and killed. (snap of his fingers) He bought a little Nash Rambler before he left here. And I tried to get him not to buy it, that little car, get a heavier car. "Aw, daddy, I want a car so I can get good mileage . . ." and blah, blah, blah. I said, "Well, Dee, if you get a heavier car, I'll feel safer riding it." But, "No, daddy." Aw, he bought the little Rambler, and a big Buick hit him broadside on his side, and he was knocked out, right there.

JH: Well, that's very sad.

EWING: And then, the principal of the school came to me, and he told me. He said, "Mr. Ewing, I want to tell you something." He said, "We've lost a fine

EWING: fellow. When he joined this organization, the music department just gelled around him." And he said, "What we had planned, thought we had wanted him to do in two years, he had just about completed all we wanted him to do in six months."

JH: Well, then he left a good legacy.

EWING: Oh, yes. Yes.

JH: You operate a nursing home?

EWING: My wife does. I don't know anything about it.

JH: When was this established?

EWING: That's been going about 15 years.

JH: Was this an outgrowth of her . . . well, this is obviously her nursing training.

EWING: Yes. She's always wanted a nursing home. And, of course, when she worked with V.N.A., she'd get around to all these various homes and found that there weren't any place for the blacks to be taken care of. And she said all the time, "I want a nursing home." So finally, this property became available to us across the street from our house, and it had a corner lot and this house set on one lot with a vacant lot to the north of us. So, we purchased it, and that's how the nursing home got started. She was happy that she had her own business, and it's worked out very nicely for her.

JH: This might be a story all by itself. How many patients do you have?

EWING: Eighteen. We're licensed for 18.

JH: Is it full?

EWING: Oh, it stays full.

You know, it's a funny thing, Mrs. Hazledine. My wife is . . . she's dedicated to that profession. And she'd like those . . . she wants those old people to have the best. Food, she has to have good food for those people and those aides and nurses, whatever.

EWING: She'll tell 'em right quick, they must have the best.
And the ones that go there don't want to leave.

JH: How many employees do you have?

EWING: Thirteen.

JH: Mercy!

EWING: That's what the state requires.

JH: So, this is fully licensed and approved?

EWING: That's right. That's right. But it was funny,
we had a hard time getting licensed for this place.

We wanted to make it larger. They had it licensed for a little small group; they had four or five people over there, but we wanted to make it larger. And it took us three years to get the plans approved in Indianapolis. Every time I'd go over there, they'd punch holes in it and say this is the law, you can't have this. So I got hold of a black architect in Indianapolis. I said, "Now, you get this thing approved for me. Now, I can't be runnin' over here, losing a whole day's work to go over here and find nothin'." And so we gave it to him. He had it all drawn up, [and] he takes it down there.

And they said, "Well, you don't have enough outlets here." He said, "That's no problem." He just scratched them in there -- put it in there. That's the architect and says, "Now, punch holes in that!" They couldn't. They had to pass. If it hadn't been for that, I don't think we'd still have it.

JH: Do you think this was discrimination because you were black?

EWING: I don't know. I'm afraid to say. I can't really say.

I don't think so. They just . . . they just didn't want the little fellows to make it. They were looking for the big organizations. I don't think they wouldn't make it because we were black. I hope not. I don't want to think that.

JH: No. Of course not.

Well, nursing homes generally I think have been subject to scrutiny because of a lot of problems.

EWING: Right. Right. Well, one thing I dislike about them -- the setup that they had -- when we were building that home, why didn't they tell us then that we had to put in a sprinkling system? They waited 'til after we got it finished, then come along four or five years later and say we had to put in a sprinkling system, which cost us twice as much. If we'd put it in while we were building it, it would have been easier. But, now that it's in, we're happy because reading about this thing in New Jersey where those people burned, that's terrible. But I still think they shouldn't have upstairs. They shouldn't have upstairs for these nursing homes.

JH: They don't?

EWING: They shouldn't have. These people had upstairs in that place where those people were burned.

JH: Yes.

EWING: Yeah.

JH: Do you live at the nursing home?

EWING: No. We live across the street.

JH: It's a separate . . .

EWING: Separate.

JH: . . . building.

EWING: Separate building. But it's directly across the street from us, and the phone rings both places. We're in on everything that happens.

JH: Mr. Ewing, I've kept you a long time. I'm inclined to ask you if we may have another interview at another time to finish your story?

EWING: O.K.

JH: Thank you very much.

EWING: You're welcome, I'm sure.

END OF FIRST INTERVIEW

SECOND INTERVIEW
Tape 1-Side 2

JH: To continue your story of your employment . . .
I believe you told me that before you actually went
into the tailoring business, you were chauffeur for
someone. Is that correct?

EWING: That's correct. Well, I was chauffeur for
Mr. Walsh, Ed Walsh.

JH: Walsh?

EWING: Yeah. He lived at 910 South 5th Street, and
he would . . . I was with him 11 years. We spent
11 winters in Florida and in Minnesota in the summer.

JH: Now, what period was this?

EWING: Oh, boy.

JH: Sort of? Was this when you were out of high
school?

EWING: Oh, yes. Yes. I was out of high school. Oh,
boy.

JH: Well now, you went to Indiana State for a year.

EWING: Right.

JH: Was that before this or after this?

EWING: Before. Before. After I was out of work . . .
out of school. Didn't have enough money to go to
school. I was working on WPA [Works Progress Adminis-
tration] and all the . . . I'd tell these fellows,
I said, "Look at me, you've never worked hard in your
life." And they'd want to feel my arm, feel my muscles.
They'd say, "You got muscles. Where in the heck did
you get them from?" I'd say, "You see those holes on
North 13th Street up there -- 'way up there by

EWING: Monninger's block house, 'way up there in that area up there?" I said, "I dug those holes. We dug enough sand out of there to put on the streets in Terre Haute." And that's the only time I really worked hard. In the winter, we were diggin' sand to fix these streets in Terre Haute. And I'd tell these fellas that, and they can't believe it.

JH: This was, then, in the '30s. Is that correct?

EWING: In the '30s. That's correct.

Then I left that job and went to work for Mr. Walsh.

JH: How long did you work for the WPA?

EWING: About . . . a little less than a year.

JH: Not very long.

EWING: Not very long because this job came up and Mrs. Shackelford . . . not Jane Shackelford . . . oh, Mrs. Shackelford on Gilbert Avenue came to me to tell me about this job. That's how I got in touch with Mr. Walsh. He hired me on the spot, and we'd go to Florida in the winter, Minnesota in the summer.

JH: What was Mr. Walsh's business?

EWING: Well, he was a whiskey salesman.

JH: All right. You chauffeured for him. Did you drive a truck? Or did you drive a . . .

EWING: A private car.

JH: . . . automobile?

EWING: He was out of the business when I worked for him. He had retired from this whiskey salesman, and he would just go to Florida and fish. He was a tough fisherman. And we'd go to Florida in the winter, Minnesota in the summer. And that's how I got in the habit of fishing.

I love fishing. My wife and I were down in Florida in November. We went deep sea fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. Got skunked but anyway we enjoyed

EWING: it. It was a nice outing. We didn't feel too badly. Of course, that boat carried 75 people, and they only brought back about seven fish. So we didn't feel too badly.

JH: No. (laughs)

EWING: (laughs) Oh, the weather was rough! The water was rough. We shouldn't have . . . really shouldn't have gone out.

JH: During your service for Mr. Walsh then, you were just a private chauffeur for him? Was he single?

EWING: Yes. He was . . . he wasn't single. He was a widower. His wife had passed some years back.

JH: Yes.

EWING: But he never remarried. He had a housekeeper that took care of his house while we were gone and . . .

JH: And he lived on South 5th? Or was this where his business was?

EWING: No, he lived on South 5th, 910 South 5th. His business, his warehouse, was here on . . . right off Wabash here, 5th and . . . I can't remember the number. Right off the alley there on South 5th Street.

JH: On 5th Street.

EWING: Yeah.

JH: But he was already retired from the whiskey business then?

EWING: Yes. He had the building rented out.

JH: Well, while you were driving for him, were you also a musician during this period, too?

EWING: Yes. Yes. Yes. I . . .

JH: I think what I'm trying to get at is how big a job this was and what it paid at that time.

EWING: Well, the job paid \$10 a week, chauffeuring.
And . . .

JH: Were you at his beck and call then, whenever?

EWING: No. I would work for him from 8 until 5. And once in a while he'd want to go to a theater at night, and he'd tell me prior to the date. "Dee, I'd like to go to the show such-and-such a date." And I'd go with him. But other than that, he would go to the Elks Club. That's where he spent his time when he was here in Terre Haute -- at the Elks Club. He'd have his breakfast, and if the weather was good, he'd walk up to the club. And I'd go and pick him up about noon to take him home for his noon lunch. He would lie down and rest for an hour or so, and I'd take him back to the club. Then I'd go pick him up at 5 o'clock. No matter what kind of a game he was in, if I were to call for him, he'd quit playin' and come right on out. He said, "Dee's out . . ." They'd call down: "Ed Walsh, Dee's here." And in about five minutes, he'd be out, soon as he could get up and out of the game. Quit right now. Come right on up.

He was very religious about time. Even when we were going to Florida, he'd say, "Dee, we're going to leave in the morning at 8 o'clock." "O.K." Well, I would take the car home. He'd pack his things in there and leave his little overnight bag out. And I'd take the car home with me overnight and pack my stuff in there. I'd be down there ready to go. If I'd get there at 7 o'clock, he still wouldn't leave. He'd sit there in his living room, look at his watch, and say, "Well, it's about five minutes to 8." He'd put his watch in his pocket. "About time we get in the car. Eight o'clock we are gonna take off." Yeah, he was very religious about time.

And he'd want to quit about 4 o'clock. Never wanted to drive at night. And we'd quit . . . Oh, yeah. I don't know. I've just had some nice employees. And they've been very nice to me.

JH: Employers.

EWING: Employers, that's right.

JH: Yes. Well, now when you traveled with him . . . well, first of all, I want to know what kind of a car it was and did you have to service this car? Did you have to take care of it?

EWING: No, I had it . . . yes, I had to take care of it 'cause he didn't know a thing about the car. He always drove Buicks. And you know it was a funny thing, when the Buick would get 19,000 miles on it, that was an old car as far as he was concerned. He said, "Dee, we got 19,000 miles on this car. Don't you think we need a new one?" "Well," I would say "if you want a new . . ." "Yeah," he would say. "We better get a new one."

So, I'd go up to Buick and make the arrangements and make a deal. Take the car back to him and let him look at it, and he'd like it. "Yep." Give me a check. "Go on and bring the Buick home."

JH: What style of car was this now?

EWING: It was always a 4-door Buick then. Back in those days I don't remember what the . . .

JH: I think they were all black at that time, weren't they?

EWING: Yes, they were all black. On, yes. Now, we had one . . . the last car we bought was a black car with a light gray top, red wheels and white tires.

JH: My!

EWING: And a funny thing, he never wanted white tires. When he was getting a little older and depending on me to do all his transactions, I took this car. Joe Parsons out at Buick was the salesman and I'd always deal with Joe. Joe said to me, "Dee," he said, "let's put Ed in a little better -- a little swankier car." He said, "He's going to Florida. You're going down there. You need it." I said "O.K."

I take this car down to the old man, and I said, "Mr. Walsh, this is the car I picked out. How do you like it?" "Ooooh, oooh. Whatcha got those red wheels?" "That's to kinda dress it up a little bit." "Do you like it?" "Yeah, I think it's pretty nice. We'll make a change," I said. "We'll go down to

EWING: Florida in style. Everybody in Florida's got these white tires and this and that on their cars. Let's go in style." "O.K. How much difference do they want?" So I told him. "That's too much money, Dee." I said, "Well, I'll call Joe and you talk with him."

I put Joe on the line and he talked. Well, he [Joe] came down, oh, a few dollars. [As] long as Mr. Walsh would get a little bit off, he was satisfied. So we made a deal, and he wrote him a check. I took the check out to Joe.

JH: How much did a car cost then?

EWING: I think that car, eight hundred and some dollars.

JH: Eight hundred dollars!

EWING: Eight hundred and some dollars.

JH: And that would be when, sort of?

EWING: Well, he died in '40 . . . '39 . . . '38.

JH: So, this was before World War II?

EWING: Yes.

JH: In the late '30s.

EWING: That's right. That's right.

JH: There's a difference today, isn't there?

EWING: Oh, my, I should say there is! You can't buy a tire for a car today (laughs). A set of tires cost you darned near \$800 if you get good tires.

JH: I'm interested in your traveling with Mr. Walsh. Mr. Walsh was white and you were black. And this was a period when these things made a difference. Did you wear a uniform?

EWING: Nope.

JH: What did you do when you had to spend the night somewhere?

EWING: That's a good question. We would drive . . . he could always get a motel -- a hotel rather. There wasn't motels . . .

JH: Yes. There weren't motels then.

EWING: And then he would ask some of the bellhops if they knew where I could get a good room -- where I could stay. So, they would finally find places for me, and I had some hellholes that I stayed in. And every morning I would go to pick him up, and he'd say, "What kind of a place did you have to stay?" I'd tell him. And we'd usually . . . it'd usually take us two days to get to Florida. So he says, "Well, how far can we get today?" I'd say, "I don't know." He'd say, "Well, I'm going to get you a room in the hotel with me." I said, "Well, now, you know what you're saying?" He said, "Yes." I'd say, "Well, I'll make it to Valdosta, Georgia." All right.

We drove like mad. Of course, we had those narrow roads in two lanes. So we drove into Hotel Valdosta, and he jumps out of the car. He was an elderly fella walking with a cane. He jumps out, trucks on into the hotel, and I could see (I parked my car at an angle so I could see in the door) I could see the clerk was . . . both his hands were going hither and thither. No, no, no. So he finally asked for the manager.

The manager came down, and he told what he wanted. And the manager said, "Well, we can't . . . we won't give him a private room. We'll give him a bed in a room with you." He says, "That's all right. I'll find out if he wants to sleep with me." So, he comes to the door and beckons for me to come inside. And as soon as I walk in, those guys reading newspapers with big hats . . . whoop, you could hear the papers go down. And he said, "Dee," (he was a loud talker) "they won't give you a private room. They'll give you a bed in the room with me. Do you want to sleep with me?" I said, "Well, I don't care as long as I get a good place to sleep; it doesn't make any difference." He said, "We won't fight, will we?" I said, "No. You couldn't win anyway." (laughs) He said, "I doubt that!"

So, he goes back over there, "Come on here and sign the book." But they wouldn't let me sign the

EWING: register; he had to sign for me. And I stayed in Room 212 at Valdosta, Georgia, the Valdosta Hotel. And that night there was a Negro band playing. Chick Webb was playing in Valdosta. That's when Ella Fitzgerald was singing with Chick Webb. And Mr. Walsh knew that I was a musician, and I told him I wanted to go hear that band tonight. "O.K. You get me in bed early," he said. "You can go on to the dance, but remember we're going to leave at 8 o'clock in the morning." "Very good."

So, I put him to bed. We always had . . . I had to have a drink with him. He wanted a little drink before he goes to bed, and I had a drink with him. So, I go down . . . here, I'm ahead of my story. They wouldn't even give me room service at this hotel. No. Could not eat there. Had to go out and eat. Anyway when I came down off the . . . went to the dance that night, and this is where I . . .

END OF TAPE 1

TAPE 2

JH: All right, Mr. Ewing, now here we are in the Hotel Valdosta, and you're staying with Mr. Walsh, excuse me, and you're in the room with him. Were you allowed to go up and down the elevator?

EWING: Yes, that's what I was going to say. When I went to the dance that evening, I went down with the . . . they had a black girl operated it. And I stayed at the dance a couple of hours. I knew I couldn't stay out too late, but I wanted to hear this band.

JH: Well, now, wait a minute. Excuse me, I wanted to interrupt you here because the band was playing where?

EWING: At the . . . in Valdosta.

JH: Was not at the hotel?

EWING: No, not at the hotel. It was in . . . what do they call these places where they have . . . tobacco factories . . . they store tobacco? I should know . .

JH: Oh, it was a warehouse type of place?

EWING: Yes, it was a warehouse type of place, but they had moved the tobacco back. And they had a rope across there to keep the blacks away from the whites, although it was a black dance. But they had a rope across so the whites couldn't get out on the floor. But after the band was playing so well, those white people forgot about that rope. Jumped over that rope and started to dancing.

JH: They came to watch, in other words.

EWING: They came to watch, but the music sounded so good they just started to dance. And they danced up a breeze. They really enjoyed themselves. Which shows you that these laws that they have . . . if they let the people alone, they'll get along.

JH: Let nature take its course?

EWING: That's right. That's right.

Then, after leaving this dance (you asked me about the elevator) . . . after leaving the dance, I go back to the hotel, and they had a different girl on the elevator. So, when I . . . the elevator door opened, she was amazed . . . hmpf, she's just . . . I'm staying in room 212. She didn't want me to ride the elevator, you know. So I . . . she carried me on up there and opened that door and slammed it right quick. And I went on to my room and had a beautiful time. Beautiful time.

And when I walked in, the old man was snoring. So, I eased into the bed and as soon as I covered up, he awakened. "Is that you, Dee?" "Yes." "Have a good time?" "Yes, I did. Saw a pretty girl out there I wanted to bring to the room with me." "Whyn't you bring her up here? We'd take care of her."
(laughs)

JH: Well now was that the only time when you really had a decent accommodation in your travels?

EWING: Just about. Other than that . . . now that was a private family in Cordele, Georgia. There was a lady there that had a fairly decent place. And I couldn't always make it to Cordele. I think I made it there twice in the 11 years I went down. And I'd stay in different locations. It'd depend upon the weather and how the traffic was. But you just couldn't make good time with all those narrow roads, two lanes.

JH: What did you do about eating? Now, you had to stop at restaurants.

EWING: We stopped in Alberta, Georgia. I remember this very distinctly. We wanted to get something to eat, so Mr. Walsh would always go in to intercede. And they refused to serve me, and he said, "I don't want him to eat in the kitchen." "Well," they said, "we'll put him back by the kitchen door." And they put me right back by the door. They wouldn't let me . . . I'm out here where I can see him, but right back by the kitchen door. That's as close as I could get to the dining room. So, they fed me there; and we'd never eat too much when traveling. We would . . . I'd usually eat a ham sandwich and maybe have a bottle of beer or a glass of beer. And after having this beer, why you'd have to go to the bathroom usually. So, I asked the fellow where was the bathroom. He says, "Don't have anything for you!" So Mr. Walsh says, "Well, where is he going?" He said, "Out there behind that Dishon poster sign." "Well," he Walsh said, "he might as well stand out here in the street. If they catch him out there, they'll put him in jail for public indecency." And the guy looked around. He said, "Now, we ate here in this restaurant," and said, "he should have a place that he could go to relieve himself." He looked around, he said, "Well, nobody's in there. Run in there right quick." So, I just took my time and went in there. I said I should have wet all over the floor. You know.

JH: (laughs)

EWING: But that's the way it's been. Then after getting to Florida, I had a home that I'd always stayed in -- Mrs. Saunders, 206 Mike Street, Leesburg, Florida. I stayed there with her 11 years. Every time I'd go down, I had a place to stay.

JH: Where was it that Mr. Walsh went in Florida?

EWING: Leesburg, Florida.

JH: Where is Leesburg?

EWING: It's a little bit south of Ocala.

JH: All right.

EWING: It's in that area. And Mr. Walsh would go and Mr. Prox -- Bob Prox -- Otto Hornung. All those old-timers would meet there. That's where they would go to fish. Mr. Bindley and . . . oh, they'd just have a grand time down there. They had one other old fellow from Reading, Pennsylvania, who would come down. I can't remember his name now, but he'd come down. He drove a Packard, two Packards really. And he would have his chauffeur bring one Packard down, and he'd hire somebody else to bring one down so that he'd have a car for himself and one for his wife. Oh, it was . . . it was something else.

But one day I was sitting out in front of the hotel talking to Mrs. Prox -- Mrs. Amy Prox. Bob was getting ready to go fishing. So, somebody came by there and resented seeing me sit out in front of this hotel talking to this white woman. He goes inside to tell Mrs. Baker -- Roberta Baker -- that I was sitting out there with a white woman. She comes out to find out who was out there. When she looked and she saw me, she said, "Oh, Dee, you know these people down here . . ." So, Mrs. Prox said, "That's all right. I don't care what these people down here are saying. This boy is from Terre Haute. He's a good friend of mine. He's a friend to all of us, all these Terre Haute people." She said, "Nothin's gonna happen. Don't worry about it." So she goes back.

Then, that night Mr. Walsh was so upset about what had happened, he goes up to his room, and he gets inebriated. Oh, he was really upset over it. Because Bob Prox . . . oh, he and Bob Prox and Amy Prox, why they were all very close. So, I told him. I said, "Well, Mr. Walsh, don't worry about it. I'll never sit in that chair again. I don't have to sit there." He said, "No. That's not the thing of it, Dee. I want to know that you are treated just like anybody else down here." He said, "These people all like you. They know you." And, "Let's have another

EWING: drink." So, "O.K. I'll have two or three drinks with you." Than I left. I wanted to . . . I could walk down to where I stayed. I was only about four blocks from the place.

So they called me back to the hotel, said, "Come back to the hotel. Mr. Walsh has fallen." Well, I go back. He had fallen down the steps, wouldn't let anybody touch him. Wanted Dee, Dee, Dee.

I go back, and I get on him. I say, "What in the world happened to you?" "Well, I . . . I . . . I . . . come on, get me." I helped him . . . put him back in bed. He said, "Let's have a" I said, "No. You're not going to get any more. You're not going to get any more." Mr. Hamilton -- Billy Hamilton -- was across the hall from him. Billy came over and says, "Heh, heh, Ed, what the heck happened to you?" You know, he and Mr. Hamilton were good buddies. Ed was a . . . Ed was family. That's a nice bunch of people. I really enjoyed them.

JH: Well, now all that time you were down there and how long did he stay in Florida?

EWING: He would stay in Florida from December until spring.

JH: So, you were there all winter?

EWING: All winter. Yes.

JH: Well, what did you do all winter?

EWING: OoooOOh!

JH: Did you have your friends down there, too?

EWING: I had friends there and It was a funny thing. The first year Mr. Walsh had told me. He said, "I want you to see Florida." And so, I would take him out to the lake. Put him on the lake, like taking him to work . . . put him on the lake. He was gonna be out there all day fishing. I'd go pick him up at 4 o'clock, so I had a chance to drive all over Florida.

JH: So you had the use of the car?

EWING: Oh, yes. Yes. I drove all . . . and so, when we left, he had a terrific gas bill. He said to me, he says (laughs), "Dee, did you see all over Florida?" I said, "No, I haven't seen all of it yet!" He said, "Well, hell, (laughs) you'd better stop seeing Florida." He said, "I'll tell you what you do. You learn to fish. If you can learn to cast, I'll take you and you can fish with me." He said, "I'll tell you. If you learn to cast -- cast well -- I'll buy you the best outfit you can buy." "Sounds good." So, I had one year to see Florida and the next years I was fishing.

I learned to cast. He gave me one of his old rods, and I was standing on the bank. When they would go out, I'd go out there early and practice casting. So one day he was coming in, and I had a nice strike, and I landed a little bass. He said, "You better land him, you better land him, Dee! If you don't, I'll throw you in the lake!" So I landed a little bass.

He came in. He said, "Now, I'll tell you one thing, Dee. Now you want to learn to cast with your left hand." He said, "A left-handed caster will catch two-to-one to a right-handed caster." I stood there and looked at him, and I laughed. I said, "What are you talkin' about?" He said, "I mean what I'm saying." He said, "I should have learned to cast with my left hand. But Ted Bindley told me years ago, the left-handed caster will catch two-to-one to a right-handed caster." I said, "How do you explain it?" He said, "Well, when you get a strike and you cast out with your right hand, you have to switch over to hit him and to reel him in. A lot of times in the change-over, you'll miss him." He said, "If you've got it in your left hand, the minute he hits it, you're ready to hit him back." So, I said, "Oh. It's a good idea." So, he said, "You're already right-handed. Try casting with your left hand." So now I cast with either hand. I cast with one; when I get tired, I cast with the left. But most of my casts are with my left hand because it is true that when you are fishin' for bass and the minute that plug hits the water, if he hits [slaps his hands together] it by the time it hits the water, if you don't hit him, you'll miss him. But if you got that set . . . it's method in this madness.

JH: Part of the interest that we have in these interviews is relating to transportation. Now, you were driving a car for Mr. Walsh all these years. I'd like you to tell us the price of gasoline [and] the conditions of the roads. This would be the middle and late '30s, is that correct?

EWING: Yes, but . . .

JH: Well, going into the '40s, actually, wasn't it?

EWING: Yeah. Oh, yes. But I can't remember the price of gas 'cause I didn't have gas . . . I didn't pay the gas bill. I just said fill it up, and he paid the bill. I don't know. I don't know a thing about it. And when I got down there . . . of course, we had a credit card, and I would just go ahead and charge it on his card. And I don't know what gas . . . I imagine 20, 28, 30 . . . 28 cents a gallon, something in that nature.

JH: You spoke of the bad roads. Tell us something about the road situation, and how did you go from Terre Haute to Leesburg?

EWING: We'd go straight down [U.S. highway] 41 all the way in to Leesburg -- not into Leesburg. [Highway] 41 would take us into just outside of Ocala. And then we'd take . . . I think it was [State road] 441 or 431 to go to Leesburg. And . . .

JH: Well, what were the roads now? Were they hard surface?

EWING: Hard surface. And some of it was paved. Now . . .

JH: Two-lane, no doubt.

EWING: Two-lane, oh, yes, two-lane all the way and curvy and hilly and into Chattanooga you got those mountains there, and it was rough. Yeah.

JH: So, it took you how many days?

EWING: It would take us two nights out. We tended to be out two nights.

JH: And you left early -- at 8 o'clock . . .

EWING: Eight o'clock. Oh, yes. Eight o'clock, eight o'clock.

JH: And drove 'til four you said.

EWING: Yeah. That's right.

JH: How much mileage could you make in a day?
Do you remember?

EWING: I don't remember. I don't remember.

JH: Probably around 250, 300 miles would be a big day, wouldn't it?

EWING: Oh, that would be a heck of a day. Because . . . let's see. We used to start from here at 8 o'clock in the morning providing the weather was . . . and the traffic wasn't too bad. We could go from here to Murfreesboro, Tennessee -- the first stop. And we'd get in there around 4 or 4:30 in the afternoon.

And then we'd have to go from there someplace into Georgia. Now, we stopped one night in Dalton, Georgia. That's when I had a horrible experience.

JH: Tell us about it.

EWING: Mr. Walsh stayed in Hotel Dalton, and he asked the bellhop to find a place for me to stay. "Yes, sir. I know a nice place, a nice place for him to stay." Well, he said, "How you going? Get a cab?" "No," I said, "I'll take the car. I keep the car at night." So, he takes me . . . gets in the car, takes me down this road, across the railroad tracks and stops in front of a house. He said, "This is where you're gonna stay." I said, "This place?!" "Yes." "O.K." I said, "You want to go back to the hotel?" He said, "Yes, but come in. Let me show you the room."

So we walked into this place. I had to walk on the 2 x 6's across. There was no floor. You had to walk on those 2 x 6's to get into the door. I got into this little narrow hallway about two yards wide, and down at the far end was a little dim light. And so he carried me into this room. It was filthy, and they had one of those little pot-bellied stoves in there for heatin' the room. And you could see where

EWING: someone chewing tobacco had spit on the stove on the outside, and all that juice was running down. And the bed was unmade. Looked like someone had just got out of the bed. And I said, "This is where I'm gonna sleep?" He said, "Yes. My wife will be home shortly and she'll change the bed for you." "O.K." I said, and I took him back to the hotel.

I go back. I left my little overnight bag in the place. I go and get my bag out of there and go back. I was standing on the street. So, pretty soon, about 5 or 10 minutes, a nice-looking young fellow came along. I said, "Will you please tell me where a fellow can get a decent place to stay?" He says, "Well, you gonna stay here?" I said, "No. I don't want to stay here. I'm supposed to." He said, "Well, it's a good thing you didn't, because when you'd wake up tomorrow, you won't have anything. That's just another clip joint." And I said, "Well . . ." He said, "Now, there is a schoolteacher right down the street here. She will take people that are passing through, usually. You look like a pretty decent fellow." He said, "I'll take you down there and introduce you to her."

So, we go down, and I told her what my story was. And she says, "Well, O.K. O.K. But now I don't feed people." I said, "Where is there a restaurant?" "Right down the street -- on this same street -- about a block there is a restaurant. I don't know how good it is, but they'll feed you." "O.K."

I went in. She had a nice room. Nice clean . . . I was surprised. So, I go out that evening about 7:30. I go down and find this restaurant, go in there, and they had this juke box going loud. Boy! It'd burst your ear drums. You could hear it a mile away, and dust was flying, and odors were terrific. So I went in. I was hungry. I wanted something to eat so bad I could just chew individuals. Anyway, she said we don't have anything but salad, salad greens and hog ears and something else. I said, "Well, I'll tell you. Give me a dish of greens and a glass of milk." So, she served it. The greens had so much grit in them -- the first mouthful I took -- I just decided it had grit in it. So I put that away, and I drank my milk, and I had a slice of bread. So the guy came around and asked me . . . I paid him and he said, "What's the matter? Aren't

EWING: you hungry?" I said, "Well, I thought I was hungry, but I guess I'm not. I'm not as hungry as I thought I was." So I paid him and walked out.

Then I went down to the place and the lady asked me what kind of a place it was. I told her the story and she said, "Well, I feel sorry for you. I'll tell you what you do. You wait until in the morning and I'll fix you a good breakfast. Before you leave in the morning, I'll fix you a good breakfast." I said, "That sounds fine."

The next morning she gives me a nice breakfast -- bacon and eggs and jelly and what-have-you, toast, milk, coffee (anything I want) and I was on my way.

Go to pick up the old man down at the hotel. He said, "What kind of room did you have?" I told him the story. He says, "Well, for crying out loud." He says, "Dee, where are we going to sleep tonight?" I said, "Now, you tighten up your hat. We're going to sleep in Leesburg, Florida, tonight." (laughs heartily) He said, "Do you think you can make it?" I said, "If you want to ride, I'll make it."

At that time, there was no limit to speed. So, he says, "O.K." And he'd always ride right in the front seat with me just . . . he'd sit there. And he was watching that speedometer. I was driving 90, 95. I just laid on it every chance I could get. And I finally made it in to Leesburg, Florida, that night about 9 o'clock. We didn't usually arrive . . . drive at nights. But we got there that night about 9 o'clock, and I was insulted when I got there. One of . . . some old crony was sittin' around and said, "Ed, well, by God, you're all dressed up and your chauffeur all dressed up, who's he working for? Who . . . what's happening? Is he working for you? Or are you working for him?" So, Mr. Walsh was tired. He was nervous 'cause I had been driving so fast. He didn't like to drive at night. So, he said, "We're working for each other. He can't get along without me, and I'm damned sure I can't get along without him!" (laughs) He said, "Dee, take the car on down and have it . . . get my overnight bag out. We won't worry about unpacking. Come back in the morning."

And so I put him out and go down to my place, where I'm staying. I pulled the car off the street.

EWING: Those streets were little narrow streets, and there was just enough space between the two houses to park the car. So I pulled in between there. And there was a tavern right across the street, and, by God, they had a fight over there that night. They were throwing pop bottles like they were shootin' a rifle. And, luckily, they didn't hit the car, so it didn't amount to too much. A couple of guys . . . I admit they were more-or-less clowning than they were really fighting, but they put on a show out there. But they started throwing pop bottles and, my goodness . . . So I told him the story the next morning. He said, "Well, they didn't hit the car, did they?" "No." "Well, that's all right."

JH: Did you have any fear that something might happen to the car when you were in these neighborhoods that weren't so good?

EWING: Yes. Yes, I was. I . . . but luckily nothing ever happened. Nothing ever happened.

JH: You touched on a subject that I think would be of great interest and this is the foods. The black people's food, I think, is often very different -- or was then certainly -- from what the white people eat. What are some of the foods that are interesting to the blacks particularly?

EWING: Well, they call it soul food.

JH: All right. Tell us about it. What is soul food?

EWING: Well, that's your greens and your potatoes and you hog . . . sheep, hog heads and the chitlins. There was a time that chitlins was given away. But now, they're a delicacy, and you have to pay a tremendous price for chitlins today. But most -- most blacks, I'll say -- like the soul food that's substantial food, heavy stuff. Something they say that . . . well, they claim will stick to your ribs.

JH: Do you think this evolved because there was a time when this was all that was available to the black people?

EWING: I think so. I think so.

JH: Now, what is chitlins?

EWING: That's the hog bowels, the hog intestines.

JH: And how are these prepared?

EWING: They are . . . now I'm not a cook (laughs), but I know that they're washed and thoroughly . . . of course, then they have a little odor. If you can stand the odor, (laughs) you can eat the chitlins. But I like them, but I can't eat them today because of my high blood pressure. I just can't eat them. We had some in Virginia when I was down for Christmas, and I had to take a taste of it. Just had to take a small piece. My wife objected to it, but I had to take a little taste.

But most people just boil them, put a little potato . . . some potatoes in there; and then when they serve them, they're served with hot sauce or vinegar or with slaw and corn bread. That is my dish. I love it with chitlins, but I just can't have it.

JH: These are then just boiled; they're not fried? Or are they?

EWING: Some people fry them. Some people say they can be fried. But I've never had any fried.

JH: Are they tender?

EWING: If you cook them right, yeah. But . . . now my brother . . . I have a brother that if you cook . . . he just detests those things. If you're cooking and he comes to your house and he smells them, he's going to leave. And he would . . . when he was home, my mother would cook chitlins, and Roy would just go away from home to eat. He wouldn't eat anything out of that pot the chitlins were cooked in for two or three weeks. He wouldn't eat anything out of that pot.

JH: Well, this makes him unusual though, doesn't it?

EWING: Yes. Yeah.

JH: What about hog feet and the ears and the heads? Now, how are these prepared?

EWING: Just boiled like you would boil boiled beef or something of this nature.

JH: Is it like a stew then?

EWING: If you cook the . . . no, it's not like a stew. The ears have a gristle in there and holds it together quite well. And, of course, the head -- hog head -- there's a certain amount of jelly, jellylike substance that comes out of that when it's cooked. And, of course, the feet has the same thing that happens to them.

JH: That's very nutritious, the gelatin.

EWING: Yes. Yes. But we didn't know that until these later years because they used to throw that stuff away. So was the chitlins that they threw away. And the hog feet were thrown away.

JH: So, basically you had a good diet by accident.

EWING: That's right. That's right.

JH: What kind of greens?

EWING: Collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens . . . that's about it.

JH: Almost all greens. How about dandelion greens?

EWING: Well, now, they used to . . . I know . . . I remember my mother used to go out what they called green picking. And then go get dandelions. Then they had some poke -- pokeberries. They'd put a little bit of that into it, which made it tasty they claim.

JH: When your wife manages these meals for the nursing homes, for your nursing home, is this some of the food that you serve there or is this a different diet?

EWING: It's a little different diet because some of the older people can't eat that highly seasoned stuff. So we have a cook that does the work over there. Does a terrific job of supplying these people what they need. And you just can't give them food like we . . . too much of it.

JH: Well, I think that's true, too. We all have to have specialized diet.

I wanted to ask some more about your . . . well, about costs for one thing. Going back to transportation again because this is an emphasis.

EWING: You mean my driving?

JH: Your driving . . . well, for one thing, how did you organize this? Did . . . did he pay all your expenses? How did this work?

EWING: It worked all right going to Florida. He paid my . . . all expenses. Then the first year that I went to Minnesota, it was a little more expensive up there. And Mr. Walsh was . . . he had plenty of money, but he was close with it.

JH: That's maybe why he had it.

EWING: (laughs) We were up there, and he said to me one evening, he said, "Dee, the expenses up here is terrific," he said, "I think that you should pay your own room rent." I said, "Oh, no. I can't do that. It's too expensive for me." I said, "I'm up here for your convenience, and my expenses go on back home just the same. I can't afford it."

And he says, "Well, I think you should." And I said, "No, I can't." I said, "I'm not going to argue with you. Tell you what I'll do. You're here. I got my train fare back home. I'll go back home and when you get ready to come home, I'll come up after you." "No. No. No. Let me think this over." So, "O.K."

The next morning I went to his room to . . . he always wanted me to come to the room to see that he got out of bed and got dressed properly and so forth. He said, "Dee, I've been thinking about what you said last night. You're getting kinda smart, aren't you?" I said, "No, I'm not getting smart. I'm just tellin' you like it is." I said, "I can't afford it. If it was left to me, I'd stay in Terre Haute." "Well," he says, "you just stay on here. I'll take care of it." "O.K." That was all right. But you . . .

EWING: Speaking of the north and the south, to my estimation there was no difference as far as I was concerned or as far as the blacks were concerned.

JH: You could see no difference in the treatment that you received north or south?

EWING: The south had the signs up for you to go by; the north didn't have the signs up, but they would tell you when you'd go in, "I'm sorry, we can't serve you."

JH: You were supposed to know this.

EWING: Supposed to know it, yeah.

And the first year in Minnesota was a disappointment to me because I knew I was going north. I thought surely everything was going to be apple pie. But I was refused to ride on the elevator at the Kahler Hotel at Rochester, Minnesota, when he was there 'cause he'd always stop in for a check-up at the Mayo Clinic coming back. And they refused me to ride on the elevator in Rochester, Minnesota. Kahler Hotel. I went there that morning. I didn't stay in the hotel 'cause it was too expensive for me, and I stayed out in the town. It was a nice room.

So, the elevator boy said, "I'm sorry. You cannot ride this elevator. I'm told to tell you not to ride the elevator. I just work here."

"What am I supposed to do?" I said, "the boss is up on the third floor."

"Well, you'll have to walk up. Or ride the freight elevator."

I said, "No. I'll just walk up."

So, I went up and told him about it. He got on the management about it. Nothing happened; they didn't change it. I still had to walk up or ride the freight elevator. And I was just haughty enough that I wasn't gonna ride the freight elevator and I walked up. Yeah.

And that happened in Minnesota. It's not a hearsay. It happened to me, and I dare anybody to

EWING: tell me that it didn't happen for I know it happened to me.

JH: I can remember when the blacks had to sit in a separate section in the movies.

EWING: Ooohp. Heh. Sure. Yes, that happened. All the theaters had a separate section for the blacks here in Terre Haute.

JH: Well, now did you go in the . . . you know I . . . it's one of those things that you have lived through but somehow or other you aren't conscious of it until later. Did you go in a different door? You went in the front door, didn't you?

EWING: Yes.

JH: In the movies?

EWING: That's right. That's right.

JH: But you had to go to your own . . .

EWING: After you'd get inside, there was a stairway going up. You couldn't sit on the first floor; you had to go upstairs. As soon as you'd get in -- pay your ticket, pay your fare, get inside the lobby -- then there was a stairway going upstairs. You'd go upstairs.

Then, in the Indiana theater, they had a special place upstairs for you to sit.

JH: It was all sectioned off. I think it still is, incidentally.

EWING: Well . . .

JH: That barrier is still there.

EWING: Hmp. I don't know. I doubt if any of the blacks sit in it.

JH: I doubt (laughing) if anybody sits in it today!

EWING: That's right. That's right.

EWING: You were asking about foods. In Florida, we took our meals at the hotel where Mr. Walsh stayed.

JH: You did, too?

EWING: Yes. But I had to eat in the kitchen.

JH: Oh.

EWING: The first year that I was there, they had me sit in the room that was partitioned off where the Kiwanis club would meet on certain days. And that's where I would eat in that room. And I could look over into the dining room and see ol' man Walsh. And he would look up to see how I was getting along and I'd But then, when the Kiwanis club met, they resented having me in that room. When they went in that room, they didn't want me in that room, so I had to get out of that room. So they put me in the kitchen. So, really, I got better food back in the kitchen than he did 'cause I'd go back and ask the chef, "Chef, I want some of this." "Naw, you don't want any of that, Dee. Take some of this. Take this; this is fresh."

JH: They were all black help in the kitchen?

EWING: All black help. All waiters were black.

But it's been a complete turn-around today. Complete turn-around. I don't know where we're headed.

JH: You know that's a good question. Where are we headed?

EWING: (laughs heartily)

JH: Or, where are we now?

EWING: Well, I don't know. We're in the middle of the deep blue sea.

JH: I wanted to ask you something about medical potential. Now, during all those years when you were growing up, were there black doctors? Or did you go to white doctors?

EWING: Nooo.

JH: Did you go to a doctor at all?

EWING: No. We had black doctors. We had a lot of black doctors. Terre Haute had about four black doctors. The white doctors didn't take care of the blacks back in those days.

JH: Never?

EWING: No. Neither did the undertakers fool with the blacks.

JH: That's right.

EWING: I don't know. We don't have a black doctor in Terre Haute today. And we don't have a lawyer. We have one attorney here. But we don't have 'em. I don't know what happened. Don't have a dentist. At one time, we had three dentists here. Now, we don't have any.

JH: Is this because the black dentists and doctors have gone to other areas where it's more lucrative, do you think?

EWING: No. These doctors . . . well, one doctor I know went because he thought he was going to do better, and he has done better by going away, one black dentist. Well, that's two of them have left here that have done better for themselves. But now, had they have stayed, I think they could have gotten by just as well. Because the blacks want to patronize a black doctor now. They see the need for a black doctor. He understands a black patient a little better than the white doctor. They have a little bit . . . a little more patience. That's my opinion. They have a little more patience, they understand. I don't know. It's heck if you do and heck if you don't.

JH: Do you think there is a difference in . . . well, I shouldn't use the word "black medicine," but I think there are some home remedies and this sort of thing that are prevalent within different cultures. Do you find that there are some black traditions in medicine that the white people don't understand?

EWING: Nooo. I think today . . . now back in the '30s, there were remedies that the blacks used that the whites didn't have. For instance, now I've always had trouble, always had trouble drawing blood, hitting my veins. And old Dr. J. J. Hoover was a master at

EWING: taking blood from me. And today I hate to go to the hospitals for blood check or anything. They just can't find my veins. But Dr. Hoover could . . . here, my boy, and (claps his hands sharply three times) hit it, got it and gone!

Now, I was in the hospital about a year ago -- a year and a half -- and every morning they were coming around saying well, I want to check your blood. And I'd just get sick because they couldn't find the vein. They'd just poke around and poke around and Today, I still have to go have blood sugar every so often. They take my sugar, and the girls just don't seem to have it. They just cannot hit those veins, and it makes me . . . it just irritates me to know that they've had professional training. They ought . . . they should be able to perfect it by now.

JH: Do you get good treatment in the hospitals?

EWING: I refuse to say. (pause) I . . . I really shouldn't say. Yes, we get fairly decent treatment, not good but fairly decent treatment. At least, I did.

JH: I think maybe what I'd like to find out is what the feeling is among the black community about the treatment that you get in hospitals.

EWING: Well, I don't think it's the blacks. It's just they don't . . .

JH: People?

EWING: People, they don't give (laughs) . . . they don't give people the care that they should have. I just don't think (voice trails off)

JH: When you go in the hospital, you can go anywhere you want, can't you?

EWING: Oh, yes. Yes, yes.

JH: Don't you feel perfectly comfortable anywhere today or do you?

EWING: Yes, I feel comfortable because . . . well, I just feel comfortable anyplace I go until they treat me wrong. And I've been treated pretty rough at some of the hospitals, and I just don't . . . I imagine they treat others the same because I've heard . . . not only the blacks, some of the whites have said the same thing, that they've given them rough treatment.

JH: What about blacks working in other areas in the community -- fire, police, political jobs? Are these available to the blacks?

EWING: They are better now. At one time, as far as the police were concerned, we didn't have but two policemen. That was our limit.

JH: You mean this was the quota in a sense?

EWING: That's right. That was the limit for the blacks -- two policemen. And then they had this black firehouse which has been integrated now. And they're all mixed up now which makes . . . which is fine. And they've gotten to the place you've got to know something about the job or else you don't get promoted. Now, there was a time that if you got on the black firehouse and you were captain, you stayed the captain. That's all . . . as far as you were going. If you were a private, that's the best you could get until someone gets busted.

But now, they got it spread out so that you've got to qualify for these different jobs.

JH: Do you think it's really fair?

EWING: I think it is. I think it's fair that you should make . . . a man should know what he's doing, know about this job. Now, we've got a black fire chief which is good 'cause he has to know what he's doing or he shouldn't be in that job.

JH: And you really think they are conducting it in a fair fashion?

EWING: I think they are. I think they are.

JH: Well, that's very hopeful then.

JH: Have you had interest in politics here in Terre Haute?

EWING: Yes. As I said, I ran for city councilman in the Sixth District.

JH: How long ago was that?

EWING: When Mr. Leland Larrison ran. Now, what year was that?

JH: Oh. That'd be in the 1960's, wouldn't it?

EWING: Yes, I think it was '68, '69, somewhere along in there. But I ran for councilman of the Sixth District on the Republican ticket. And that's what beat me -- Republican. Not because I was Dee but because I was running . . . because I ran on the Republican ticket.

JH: You don't think it was who you were, it was what you were running under?

EWING: That's right. That's right.

JH: Are there very many black Republicans?

EWING: No. Not in Terre Haute. Most of them here are Democrats.

JH: Why are you a Republican?

EWING: Well, because when I first registered . . . when I first registered to vote, I registered as a Republican. In those days, there weren't any black Democrats, and my dad always fought against the Democrat party. He said just . . . they were going to send you . . . try to get you back . . . run you back to Africa. My dad (laughs) . . . he was a stern believer in Republicanism. But I found out later that that was all a lot of hogwash.

Then, I supported the Democrat ticket for 18 years. I supported Ralph Tucker. I liked Tucker because when I was with Paul Stuart's orchestra, we played at the Trianon and he Tucker was "The Man on the Street." And he was broadcasting, and that Tucker could make you play. We'd get . . . on Sunday afternoons . . .

EWING: we'd play every Sunday afternoon -- Sunday night, and Saturday evenings. And he would come out there. We were always glad to see Tucker announce our band. He'd get up, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is Paul Stuart's orchestra. He's coming to you from the beautiful Trianon ballroom, Terre Haute, Indiana. Hit it, boys, hit it!" And he just made you work your fanny off. He was quite a man.

But then when he ran for City Clerk, I liked him 'cause he seemed to be fair, and I supported him. Then when he got kinda messy, I switched away from him . . . took away from him and went back on the other side. And I think that if people were to go with the man they think's doing a job, they'd be better off. It'd be for better government.

JH: There are many people who feel that there should not be partisan politics on the local level. Do you agree with this?

EWING: Well, I don't really.

JH: What does the party do for you?

EWING: No. It isn't what the party does for me; it's what I'm going to do for the party.

JH: Well, that's a good answer.

EWING: Yeah, that's right. The party can't do anything for me. And I always tell people, the party doesn't mean a thing; it's the man. The man makes the party; the party doesn't make a man. You get a no-good man, Republican or Democrat, if he's no good, he's no good. The party's not going to make him.

JH: (laughs) It won't make any difference what his party . . .

EWING: Naw. No.

JH: Do the black people want to become involved politically, do you think?

EWING: They are now. They want to do more now because The way I explain it to a lot of the young blacks ('course the old ones you're not gonna change them) but I tell a lot of the young blacks that when there

EWING: weren't any black Democrats, the Republican party knew they had the black vote. And they had it and they could always win. But they got to the place that they were just a little bit negligent. They'd promise this, and they didn't fulfill themselves . . . didn't fulfill their promises. So some of the blacks decided, "Well, we're not getting anything over here, I'm going to try the other side."

Then, a little education came in there, helped them. So, they decided to go with the Democrats. And, sure enough, the Democrats did finally do a little bit more for them than the Republicans had done.

JH: All right. What did they do? What specifically?

EWING: Well, that's a good question. A lot of them claim that they have . . . Well, I know one thing, they've gotten better . . . gotten jobs in offices and jobs of this nature which they didn't have. But now, they have slacked, so the Republican party has come to the front to do more -- a little bit more -- for the blacks; and they're going to have to if they're going to get the black vote back where it was. They're going to have to do more for the blacks. And the black people, to my estimation, are going to have to apply themselves and ask for these jobs. If you won't ask for it, they're not going to get it. You're going to have to go in and apply for these things. And you should be qualified.

JH: Do you feel that the thrust in education to educate, well, blacks and whites both . . . after all, if you're well educated, if you have skills to sell, you have something to sell yourself on, right?

EWING: That's right.

JH: Do you think these things are really happening?

EWING: I think that most people today are striving for more education. Education is playing a great part for the blacks and the whites, well, and for particularly the blacks [who] haven't had a chance. Well, they didn't have enough money to go to college to get an education because they kept them down on the lower echelon, low pay. So if you got through high school, you were lucky. But today the blacks have

EWING: better jobs. They've got these grants where they can get these grants to go to school. And it's . . . anybody can get an education today. If they don't, it's their own fault.

JH: Yes. Don't you think the opportunity is there if you really want it?

EWING: Sure. That's right. That's right. Now, when I went to school, I couldn't . . . there was no such thing as grants. We just . . . if you didn't have it, too bad. I remember the last year that I . . . well, the last term that I went to school, I played with Paul's band, and I had saved all summer. I had saved \$75 to go back to school in the fall by playing during the summer months. And I had budgeted myself to when I left the last day of school, I had one nickel coming back down to college, and I had to walk home. I had a nickel to come to school; I didn't have any money to come back home. I had one nickel. I had walked back from this

END OF TAPE 2-SIDE 1

TAPE 2-SIDE 2

JH: You had saved \$75 in order to go back to Indiana State.

EWING: Right.

JH: How much was the tuition then, do you remember?

EWING: Fifteen fifty. (\$15.50)

JH: Was that for everything?

EWING: That was the tuition.

JH: The tuition.

EWING: But you had to buy your books and so forth.

JH: Yes. So, did the \$75 take you any distance?

EWING: It took me for that term. It took me all the way through . . . up to the last day. Then I had five cents to come to school, and I had to walk back home. I had one nickel to come down to school . . . come to school. Ride the bus.

JH: The bus was a nickel then?

EWING: Yeah. That's right. It wasn't a bus. It was a streetcar. They didn't have buses; it was a streetcar. (laughs) Shoot. Yessir. Yeah.

JH: All right. Now I wanted to ask you what you studied at school.

EWING: My major was physical ed and music.

JH: But you didn't have enough money to go after that first year?

EWING: No, indeed. No way. I had these five brothers behind me, little fellows, and I had to . . . I tried to help to support them and . . .

JH: The atmosphere in your home must have been very good to encourage you to do this. This was a little unusual then, wasn't it?

EWING: Yes. My mother was the type of person that if you wanted to do something, she would work her fingers off to help you. Now, my ideas when I first came . . . before I started in to high school, I wanted to be a pharmacist.

JH: A pharmacist?

EWING: That's right. And my mother said, "Well, if you want to be a pharmacist, we will do our best to send you to school." She just . . . she was that type of person, outgoing. She wanted to help you. And no more pulling back. All of her children . . . If any of 'em wanted to do anything, why, she was willing to shove you, push you forward. She wanted all of us to do better than she and my dad had done.

JH: Did any of your brothers -- other brothers -- take any kind of higher education?

EWING: No. I had one brother, the baby brother, was going to finish, but he had a little disappointment in his high school career -- curriculum. He was on the basketball team at the school and doing quite well. And when they had . . . at the end of the season, when the Mothers' Club had a dinner for the basketball players, they didn't invite him.

JH: Was he the only black player?

EWING: He was the only black player on the team, and he was so put out with it, he just quit school. Didn't finish high school. And I always . . . often told him that he should have finished, and I just couldn't take it. And he moved to Indianapolis. He's still over there now. He went . . . worked for the railroad. He's retired from the railroad now and got a very good job at Summit House. He's the yard man or head man or something. He takes care of all the people there. When they want to go to the airport, he does the driving. He takes them to all these places. He's called a P.W.

JH: I think you need the atmosphere in order to cultivate this, don't you?

EWING: Yes. Well, we had a lovely family. My mother and father were together although dad was a little more reserved than my mother. He thought that he didn't get an education and [that] we should get . . . go to work as soon as we were old enough.

JH: He didn't think this was important.

EWING: No, he didn't. He didn't. Mother always thought it was very important that we get an education.

JH: Well, now here you are in business still. Do you wish you had gone on to Indiana State or some other school? Did you regret not having become a pharmacist?

EWING: Nooo. No. Because I . . . a lot of times we set our goals one way, then we get detoured. We go another way, and it's a little better for us. Now, had I been a pharmacist and away from the musical field, I probably wouldn't have met my wife, you know. See?

JH: (laughs)

EWING: You see?

JH: You count your blessings?

EWING: Yes. Yes. And I can say one thing. That's the only thing -- the only good thing -- that Uncle Sam did for me. He gave me a good wife. (laughs)

JH: You didn't really mind your years in service though, did you? Or, did you?

EWING: I didn't mind it 'cause I had an easy life.

JH: Well, what was your relationship to your fellow soldiers while you were in the service? Were you in an all-black group?

EWING: All-black group.

JH: They were all segregated then?

EWING: Oh, yes. Yes. And when we went to Texas, this group that we had was the 6th Medical Battalion Band. And out of that band we had a 15-piece dance orchestra that played at the Officers' Club. And they would pay us \$2 a night per each for playing. And we were over behind the cesspool in Camp Barkley, Texas. We weren't in Camp Barkley proper; we were over behind the cesspool. And the white group . . . there was a white group found out that we had this band over there, and they invited us over to Camp Barkley. We were still supposed to be in Camp Barkley, but they invited us over there to have a jam session.

So, we went over there and we got together for, oh, about a month, jamming -- having a heck of a time. Then the colonel found out that we were having a jam session, and he broke it up. Said, no, we couldn't have a jam session. Black and white couldn't be together. So, that broke that up. Army now.

JH: This is the army.

EWING: Yeah.

JH: We hear a great deal about drugs and the musical world. Was this prevalent then?

EWING: Not too much. Not then. At least I didn't know anything about it.

JH: You did not?

EWING: No, I did not know anything about it.

JH: What about today?

EWING: Today, I don't know anything about it. I was playing at Linton at the Elbow Room one evening when I had my little group, and two fellows walked in -- one in fatigues and one neatly dressed. And he came up to the band and said, "Say, fellow, you play a lot of saxophone. Where you from?" "I'm from Terre Haute." He said, "Listen, don't you know of anywhere we can get a little something?" I said, "What do you mean, a little something? Something of what?" He said, "Well, we just got back from overseas." He said, "We'd like to have a little tea or something." I said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, don't you know anything in Terre Haute?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll look around and see what I can find for you." He said, "Well, when'll you be back down here?" "Well, next week."

So, the next week I go down and see two fellows come in -- one in fatigues and the other one neatly dressed. He comes up to the bandstand and asks, "What'd you find out?" I said, "Fellow, you're barking up the wrong tree." I said, "I don't deal in that stuff, and I don't know anything about it." I said, "All I know, I smoke cigars, drink good whiskey, and chase women."

JH: (laughs)

EWING: And you know I haven't seen those fellows from that day to this one. Haven't seen them.

So they were just trying to find out. But, you know, they always branded musicians as being dope addicts -- they had to have dope. I don't agree with them.

JH: You think this is not so?

EWING: It's not so. All of them. There are maybe a few of them. It might be a little more prevalent now since they've brought it out, saying you can't do it. It's just like if you tell me I can't do anything, that's when I do all my determination. I want to do it 'cause you say I can't do it. And I think that's what's happening today.

You can't brand a musician -- put it on the musicians about dope -- dope addicts. That's one of the things I taught my son. I said, "Dee, don't you allow yourself to be caught in a rut. Don't let anybody give you a package and say, 'You take this to that man over there.'" And he didn't. He was in New York, and he got around that mess. I can proudly say that I can stick my chest out and hold my head up high 'cause he didn't touch that stuff. And he was telling me that when he was in . . . I remember, oh, heck . . . Virginia, one of the kids came to school, and he was sittin' out on the step smoking. Dee asked him, "What're you smoking there, fellow?" "Cigarette." "What kind of a cigarette?" "Cigarette." He said, "I know what you're smoking." He said, "Give it to me."

And he passed it over to Dee, and Dee took it, and so he tore it up. So, he like to have a fit. Dee says, "If you want to be in my band, you can't use that stuff, brother. You can use it off campus, but you can't use it here."

And he didn't have any trouble. The rest of them . . . the word got around. Of course, you can smell that stuff from a mile away. I remember when I was a youngster, I went to Indianapolis to hear Jimmie Lunceford's band. He had a sax man in there -- Joe Thomas, a very fine tenor man. He said, "When we get through here". . . . (He was looking at the girl I was going with. I had . . . this girl was from Rockville. I took her over to Indianapolis. He was lookin' at her. And he was trying to get me to come to the jam session.) He said, "Let's . . . we're gonna . . . after we get through playin', we're going in and blow some." I said, "Where you gonna blow?" "Around to the Y." Well, that's the black Y in Indianapolis.

We go around there, and I had dim lights and all I hear is these guys sniffing and carrying on.

EWING: I said, "Man, why you . . ." He said, "Come on. Line up." I said, "Man, what're you talking about?" "No. Come on, girls. Get out of here. I don't want to be bothered with that kind of talk. I thought you were going to blow your horn!" "No, man, we're gonna blow!" I said, "No. That's not for me." So I wanted to get out of there.

JH: Oh, it was a smoke-in.

EWING: Sure. Sure. Yeah.

JH: Do you think it's prevalent in the black neighborhood now? In all neighborhoods?

EWING: All neighborhoods. All neighborhoods. We were in Florida just last month -- yes, November -- and we were at the Holiday Inn. And a white couple came out of the tavern, and they'd been doped up. They had a heck of a fight right there in the lobby in the hotel. I said, for Christ's sake, this is something you never see . . . you've never seen anything like that in a fine place like this. And they had on those darned jeans and . . . Oh, terrible, terrible.

JH: Do you think there's any hope of changing this? Do you think it's going to change?

EWING: I'd like to see it change, but I doubt seriously if they're going to change this thing because they're shipping too much of it into this country today. And everybody . . . these youngsters are all trying to see how they're going to react to it. Then they get adapted to it, and they can't get away from it. They get hooked. And they go from this lightweight stuff to the heavy stuff. This is bad. And I hate to say it . . . see it, but I don't think they're going to ever control it. I think it's out of hand.

JH: It seems so.

EWING: Yes. It seems so.

JH: Mr. Ewing, you've been more than generous with your time, and I certainly appreciate it. And I can say I'm very happy to know you.

DEMETRIUS EWING
Tape 2-Side 2

84

EWING: Well, thank you. Thank you. It's been a
pleasure doing business with you.

JH: (laughs) Thank you very much.

END OF TAPE 2

INDEX

- Booker T. Washington
 School, 3
 "Blacks," 29-30
 Businessman, 16, 19-25
 Chauffeur, 47-64, 67-68, 70
 Clerk, 9-19
 Doctors, 70-72
 Downtown, 25
 Drugs, 81-83
 Ewing, Mary Cox, 39-42, 44-46
 Ewing Nursing Home, 44-46
 Fashions, 17-18, 22-23
 Hamilton, William, 6-7
 Harris, Evangeline, 33-34
 Hayward, Anna, 4
 Hoover, J. J., 71-72
 Hyde Center, 3
 Hyde, Charles T., 3
 Indiana State Teachers College, 77-78
 Indiana theater, 69
 Jacobs, Irwin N., 9-18
 Lacey, Joseph, 4
 Levin, A. N., 15-16
 Lincoln School, 2, 32-33
 Lyda, Wesley, 5
 Musician, 7, 33-39, 81
 National Tailors, 9, 11-25
 Orchestra, Paul Stuart's, 7, 33, 74-75
 Politics, 74-76
 Royal Syncopators, 36-38
 Segregation, 3, 6-10, 53-57, 61-63, 68-71, 80
 Shoeshining, 30-32
 Soul food, 64-66
 Sports, 3-4
 Stuart, Paul, 7, 33, 36
 Terre Haute House, 6-7
 Theaters, 69
 Theodore, Gus, Shoeshine Parlor, 30-31
 Transportation, 60-61
 Trianon, 74-75
 Tucker, Ralph, 74-75
 Unions, 9-10
 Visiting Nurse Association, 42
 Walsh, Ed, 47-64, 67-68, 70
 Wiley, 2-6
 Woolworth, 8
 Works Progress Administration (WPA), 47-48